

Organizational and Decision Making Guidelines:

The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition



VIRGINIA
Beginning Farmer & Rancher
COALITION PROGRAM



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Background

Purpose: Organizational and Decision Making Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to provide transparent organizational guidelines and decision making tools to be used by all members of the Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Program. While this document will be made available to the public on the VBFRCP website and per request, its primary function is to guide the work and processes within the coalition and enhance the orientation process for new members. As a “living document,” it is meant to embody flexibility and encourage inclusiveness as the coalition continues to develop and expand its programming and collective impact. The management team and advisory group will review the functionality of this document annually, and coalition members are welcomed and encouraged to provide feedback and recommendations at any time. Any proposed modifications to the guidelines will be collated by the management team and adopted through a consensus based process as described herein.

Rationale

Prudens quæstio dimidium scientiæ – to know what to ask is to already half know.

With the rate of population growth in the U.S. at 0.7%, our population will likely double within the next 100 years. Coupled with this dramatic rise in population is the increased pressure on our land and resource base, including the loss of 72 million acres of farmland since 1982 (U.S. Census 2008). Beginning farmers are crucial to our way forward as we look at doing more with less while addressing the ramifications of an aging population of experienced farmers – the average age of principle farm operators reported at 58.3 years in 2012. In addition, for 1.5 million of the 2.1 million farms nationwide, farm income accounted for less than 25% of their household income, indicating that farming is falling short as a viable full-time occupation for middle class Americans.

Although important differences exist, almost all beginning farmers and ranchers face similar barriers to successful farm start-up:

- High startup costs coupled with limited access to credit and capital
- Tenure obstacles for farm entrants and farm succession challenges for exiting farmers
- Lack of knowledge and support structures for best practice adoption
- Limited access to scale-appropriate markets for sustainable economic performance.

As we transition to new generations of farmers in Virginia, many of these challenges must simultaneously be addressed. Required are new coalitions of all agriculture stakeholders to recognize these challenges and evaluate the special skills of each to contribute to the establishment of a resilient agriculture to serve present and future generations.

The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition recognizes the challenges to educate, fund, and place the next generation of farmers on the land and has invited many stakeholders to join in seeking solutions. First, taking on the responsibility of catalyst, the Coalition continually shares its understanding of the challenges and the need to act promptly. All in agriculture are invited to join in by sharing their expertise and capacities to influence the future and form effective action programs to place new farmers on the land. Second, the coalition serves as a facilitator identifying partners who can make a difference and offering organizing, education and research services to support our agricultural future. In facilitation, we work together using available resources to make this critical transition.

Common Vision

Holistically improve start-up opportunities for a diversity of beginning farmers and ranchers to establish and sustain viable agricultural operations and communities in Virginia.

Mission

The Coalition formed in the fall of 2010 as a way to more effectively and comprehensively address start-up needs of Virginia's beginning farmers and ranchers. We support the development and enhancement of whole farm planning curriculum and training, online resources, social networking, and farmer mentoring.

Objectives

The premise of this Coalition-based program is that a collaborative, capacity-building and a community-based participatory approach is a precursor and prerequisite to building sustainable partnerships and educational experiences for and with beginning farmers, both of which are required for building effective outcomes as they are applied to the beginning farmer situation in Virginia. To that end, the programmatic aims of the Coalition include:

- **Coalition Building & Capacity Building:** Establish a diverse coalition of stakeholder organizations, agencies, and groups to support the development and growth of outreach, education, training, and networking opportunities for Virginia's beginning farmers and ranchers
- **Whole Farm Planning Curriculum & Programs:** Collaboratively develop and deliver whole farm planning curriculum using experiential learning and classroom delivery methods.

- **Social Networking and Resources:** Collaboratively develop and deliver online learning tools and resources using examples of whole farm planning curriculum activity.
- **Farmer Mentoring:** Develop and strengthen mentoring networks to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and skills of experienced farmers and ranchers with the beginning farmer and rancher community.
- **Participatory Program Assessment:** Explore the collective impact of the VBFRC through an analysis of the Coalition model as a community-based participatory approach to beginning farmer training and program development.

Whole Farm Planning

Whole farm planning is distinct from other farm planning approaches because it ties all the needed planning together for the *whole* farm. This holistic approach is based on the short and long-term vision farmers have for themselves and the farm. Following the whole farm planning process and inventory (see below and on website) actively helps beginners tailor farming goals and actions over time to best fit needs and preferences for long-term viability.

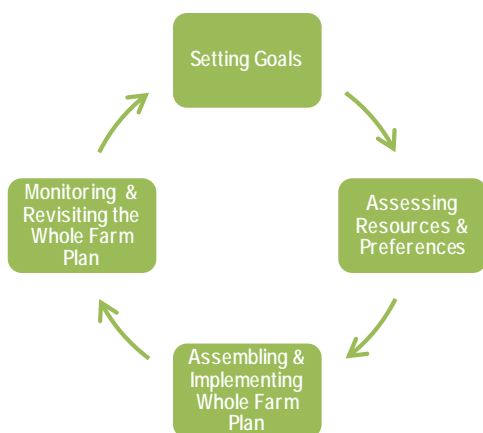


Figure 1. Whole Farm Planning Process

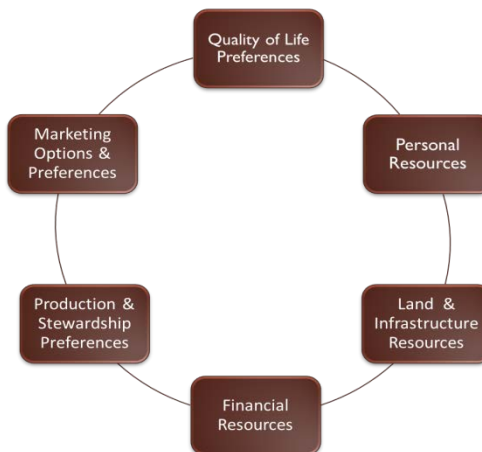


Figure 2. Whole Farm Plan Inventory

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Audience

We are dedicated to addressing the needs of the full spectrum of beginning farmers and ranchers in Virginia. The Coalition recognizes a diversity of farming experiences, backgrounds, and aims held by Virginia beginning farmers and ranchers. Many groups find it useful to look at the stages of commitment, decision-making, and skills that farmers pass through as they begin a career in farming. From this perspective, we understand beginning farmers and ranchers to include:

- **Prospective or explorer farmers** – Individuals interested in starting a farm or ranch. This includes next-generation farm family members as well as those who do not come from a farming background.

- **Startup farmers** – Individuals who are in the early stages of their agricultural operation.
- **Re-strategizing farmers** – Farmers who are making changes to their operations after an initial period of farming. These individuals usually have increased decision-making responsibility and commitment to farming.
- **Establishing farmers** – Farmers who are expanding, diversifying, and stabilizing their farming operations
- **Transitioning farmers** – Individuals who are family farm members who have decision-making roles on the farm without having primary farm operator status. These individuals are also referred to as heritage farmers.

While available to all beginning farmer learners, the Coalition gives special consideration, through targeted outreach and tailored programming, to the needs of socially disadvantaged, limited resource, military veteran, and young farmers. These groups are key stakeholders for outreach as identified by VBFRCP partners.

The VBFRCP also directly supports the service provider/farmer educator community. This would include those individuals who provide education, information, or resource support to Virginia's beginning farmers and ranchers. Coalition partners typically represent the service provider and farmer educator community. With these partners, our goal is to enhance the organizational coordination and collective impact of the Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition to offer and support place-based and culturally-appropriate education, training, and networking opportunities for the next generation of farmers and ranchers in Virginia.

Farmer categories are a modification of those referred to by the New England Small Farm Institute. For full reference, see: Sheils, C. (2004). What does the term “new farmer” mean? In *Working with new farmers: Topics in professional development* (pp. 4-7). Growing New Farmers, a special project of The New England Small Farm Institute.

Community-based Approach



With the Coalition at the heart of the VBFRCP, we follow a participatory learning, action research, and collective impact approach to address the unique needs of Virginia’s beginning farmer and ranchers. We refer to this as a community-based participatory approach to training and program development that comprises the knowledge and experience of service providers, experienced farmers, and the beginning farmer and rancher community for planning, delivery, and assessment purposes. This is a bottom-up approach to research and program planning, which aims to equitably involve partners in the process. This educational approach recognizes the unique strengths that each group brings to

the Coalition. We believe that this process helps build sustainable partnerships and services for and with beginning farmers for long-term agricultural viability and sustained impact.

Organizational Structure

Coalition

The Coalition component of the VBFRCP formed in 2010 to as a way to effectively address start-up needs of Virginia’s beginning farmers and ranchers by offering coordinated and high quality outreach, education, training and resource support. The Coalition acts as an umbrella network of cross-sector organizations to assist in the development and enhancement of whole farming planning programs, educational resource support, service provider referrals, and networking. Therefore, the Coalition is collaborative in nature to adequately address the start-up needs of farmers and ranchers in Virginia. Each Coalition partner has a strong record of providing outreach, education, training, and resource services to farmers and ranchers in Virginia. While a strong team of collaborators exist, the Coalition welcomes the participation of other organizations to help to build a more comprehensive support structure by expanding, enhancing and sustaining services and resources. The Coalition includes farm businesses; Cooperative Extension; land-grant universities (VT and VSU); federal, state, and local governmental agencies; and non-profit organizations serving the agricultural industry:

Virginia Cooperative Extension serves as the backbone organization for the Coalition and VBFRCP to facilitate program communication and activity. With VCE, Coalition members share a sincere commitment to addressing whole farm planning needs through organizational cooperation and promotion. The Coalition is therefore represented by a diverse, proven, and committed network that together provides a vibrant resource for beginning farmers and ranchers and service providers in a range of content areas that emphasize a holistic and integrated approach to start-up:

- Whole farm planning assessment
- Marketing
- Whole farm business management and financial planning
- Land acquisition and tenure
- Sustainable farming practices

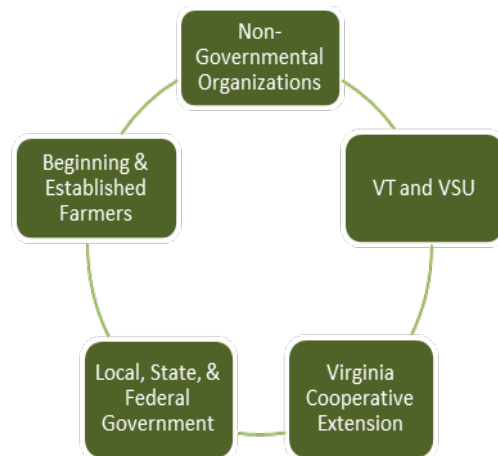


Figure 3. The Coalition consists of five domains that create an umbrella network

Coalition service providers/farmer educators have ample experience and real-world knowledge that beginning farmers and ranchers seek. While each member may provide specific knowledge about a particular topic or need, each Coalition member ultimately shares a commitment to addressing farm start-up needs from the perspective that the farm is a “whole” that makes up many, integrated parts. *For a full Coalition list, see table 2 found in the Acknowledgment Section.*



VBFRCP Management Team

The VBFRCP management team is a partnership brought together through key stakeholders and decision makers within the VBFRCP. Virginia Tech/Virginia Cooperative Extension, however, provide overall administrative, communication, and networking support for the management team and Coalition. The management team is primarily responsible for the development, management, and evaluation of program activity. The management team receives guidance and input from the advisory group to aid in the overall decision making process for the Coalition. Overall, they will consult on major management issues, program decisions, and serve as an organizational caretaker to monitor membership and outreach efforts. Day-to-day decisions are primarily made by the management team. The management team is led by Kim Niewolny, Program Director and Extension Specialist, Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education at Virginia Tech. The management team also includes program co-directors, program associates, farm mentor coordinators, and students housed in VCE, Virginia Tech, and organizations within the Coalition. The management team also serves as investigators for grant projects that help fund Coalition initiatives. Therefore, the organizational make-up of the management team may transition over time. For more information, contact Kim Niewolny, Program Director and Extension Specialist, at niewolny@vt.edu or 540-231-5784. VBFRCP Website: www.vabeginningfarmer.org

VBFRCP Advisory Group

The advisory group of the Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition should consist of no more than 8 but no less than 6 individuals from the Coalition who represent both farmer and service provider perspectives in Virginia. This elected advisory group is responsible for providing input to guide program activity to best address the expressed needs of the Coalition.

Expectations of Participating on the Advisory Group include:

- Representing the Coalition of stakeholders from his/her “beginning farmer” perspective
- Representing the Coalition of stakeholders from the collective perspective of the Coalition and VBFRCP
- Responsible for guiding action toward reaching VBFRCP goals and objectives
- Working with the management team to help make decisions pertaining to funding and partnerships
- Attending monthly meetings via phone conference or face-to-face when possible
- Participating on ad hoc subcommittees as needed

Advisory Group Nominations and Election Process:

- Representation of partners include at least: 2 farmers and 2 service providers at all times.
- A goal of 7 representatives serving at one time (i.e. no less than 6 but no more than 8)
- No more than 1 representative from a specific organization may serve at any one time
- At least 1 management team member will help facilitate meetings and processes
- 2 year term decided by the timeline of program activity, maximum 2 consecutive terms
- Elected by voting partners of the Coalition through an online ballot process facilitated by the management team
- Call for nominations will precede yearly elections
- Nominations can be made by any Coalition partner during in-person meetings and/or online during the call for nomination time period (i.e., 7 day time period)
- Nominations will be confirmed with the nominee prior to an election

Organizational Management and Activity

In the case of the VBFRCP, we aim for democratic program planning through a number of farmer community-university decision making and implementation practices that involve the advisory group, management team, and overall coalition stakeholders. This proposed design is based on participatory program planning approaches and was the result of input by the VBFRCP advisory group, management team, and listening sessions conducted during our statewide VBFRCP meetings.

At the center of the Coalition is the management team that is guided by the advisory group through monthly meetings and online communications to discuss and make decisions (see below for more detail about decisions making). As just stated, the management team comprises individual representatives from VBFRCP initiatives and program activity. All Coalition members, as stakeholders, are encouraged to participate in program activity and initiatives as opportunities to support beginning farmers and ranchers in their communities and across the commonwealth. The below diagram illustrates 2014-2015 activity plans and the organizational structure that informs how the management team, advisory group, and overall Coalition function to serve beginning farmers and the VBFRCP partners who work with them.



Figure 4. VBFRCP 2014-2015 Activity and Organizational Structure

How to Participate

Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Partnership

The Coalition of the VBFRCP is open to any organization that adheres to the long-term goal, objectives, and collaborative nature of the VBFRCP. Diversity and cross-sector representation is important to achieve the ongoing aims of the VBFRCP. The Coalition thus includes farm businesses; Cooperative Extension; land-grant universities; federal, state, and local governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations serving the agricultural industry. These organizational partnerships define our view that the future of agriculture rests with our ability to effectively and holistically build organizational capacity across of the spectrum of the agricultural sector with and on behalf of the next generation. The diversity of our Coalition reflects our commitment to developing that capacity.

Benefits for partners include:

- Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and skills to better serve the beginning farmers
- Fill program gaps and build new relationships of enhanced organizational capacity in the agricultural communities we work with.
- Fostering community-university-extension partnerships to identify and solve problems pertinent to VBFRCP stakeholders - we can accomplish much more by working together!

Roles and responsibilities of partnership:

Individuals are asked to be involved in Coalition programming and meetings, which includes, but is not limited to, the following roles to perform as part of a VBFRC Partnership:

- Illustrating a commitment to the vision and objectives of the Coalition and VBFRCP
- Investment in understanding the structure, processes, and the diversity of participants
- Engaging and collaborating with coalition partners through attendance at in-person and virtual meetings / processes that support VBFRCP activity
- Leveraging resources for the benefit of the Coalition and the farmers we work with

How are people involved?

- Participation through semi-annual Coalition meetings
- Core involvement through:
 - Developing, implementing, and promoting whole farm planning programming, curriculum, resources, and mentoring activities
 - Dissemination of VBFRCP and Coalition member information (i.e. sharing coalition partner resources within your networks of providers and/or farmers)
 - Professional development training and in-service opportunities through bi-annual Coalition meetings, webinar, and other face-to-face events and activities
- Networking and referrals (i.e. referring beginning farmers and ranchers to appropriate Coalition partners and serving as ambassadors of the Coalition and VBFRCP)

Active participation expectations: attendance at one semi-annual meeting/year and engaging in at least one core involvement option during a 12 month period.

How to get involved?

- Familiarize yourself with website and on-line resources: www.vabeginningfarmer.org
- Reach out to existing Coalition members
- Contact program director and/or program coordinator to begin membership process
- Attend VBFRCP meetings and trainings
- Promote VBFRCP events and resources with your beginning farmer audiences/networks

VBFRCP Coalition Process for Partnership

Organizational Partnership of the VBFRCP:

The Coalition includes numerous individuals who represent an agricultural organization, agency, institution, and/or farm business. These entities are referred to as organizational partners. The Coalition, therefore, focuses on organizational partnership within the VBFRCP, which is made up of representative individuals who contribute to the work of the Coalition. Some individuals may be able to represent more than one organizational partner within the Coalition. There is no limit to how many individual representatives from a given organization can participate in the Coalition at one time. There are two ways in which the Coalition encourages VBFRCP partnership:

1. *Partners of the VBFRCP*

- Includes those organizations, represented by an individual(s), who have been actively involved in the Coalition for 12 months or more
- Includes voting privileges with one vote per individual (see more below)
- Active partners are eligible to receive economic benefit through funding decisions

2. *Provisional Partners of the VBFRCP:*

- Includes those individual or organizations that are seeking participation within the VBFRCP and Coalition, however, have been involved/active for less than 12 months
- Provisional partners are encouraged to provide input and participate fully in activities, trainings and meetings.
- Must complete the 12 months of Coalition activity (e.g., meetings, professional developing trainings, farmer trainings, and online communications) before voting privileges are enacted, which also includes making and directly receiving economic benefit from funding decisions.

Expedited Partnership (extenuating circumstances)

This process allows the VBFRCP to maintain continuity of involvement of an organization when a new representative is transitioning to participate on behalf of their home organization. This process includes the following points:

- Requires a brief, written request to be submitted to the Management Team (contact Program Director) for review by the Management Team and Advisory Group
- This request must include a “sponsorship” by an existing Coalition partner representative
- Reviewed by the Advisory Group and Management Team using these guidelines:
 - Will an existing organization have no representation?
 - Does the applicant have support from existing members?
 - Has the applicant reached out to the Management Team or Advisory Group?
 - Has the applicant previously been a member of the Coalition?

Coalition Meeting and Participation Expectations

Attendance at in-person meetings and interim virtual communications, while voluntary, are essential for the ongoing success of the coalition. We come together in a number of ways, including several face-to-face program events, professional development trainings, semi-annual Coalition meetings, and online communication activities:

Coalition meetings allow us to:

- Make program updates
- Network and communicate with each other
- Learn from new and current partners to enhance program impacts
- Engage in strategic planning to guide program activity
- Propose ideas and make decisions

Regional events and trainings enable us to:

- Increase knowledge of whole farm planning best practices to new coalition and continuing Coalition partners
- Outreach to new organizational partners
- Promote the coalition and its goals to beginning farmers and ranchers

Virtual communications enable us to:

- Announce VBFRCPC and Coalition partner events
- Schedule VBFRCPC meetings
- Call for Coalition input and feedback
- Vote on decision making points (e.g., elections)

Modes / Formats for communication include:

- VBFRCPC website: www.vabeginningfarmer.org
- VBFRCPC email address: vabeginningfarmer@vt.edu
- Coalition Listserv: VA_BEGINNING_FARMER_COALITION@LISTSERV.VT.EDU
- Beginning Farmer Listserv: VA_BEGINNING_FARMER_GENERAL@LISTSERV.VT.EDU
- VBFRCPC Webinars for program updates and e-trainings
- VBFRCPC YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/VABeginningFarmers>
- Blog: <http://news.cals.vt.edu/vabeginningfarmer/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Virginia-Beginning-Farmer-Rancher-Coalition/239686926056659>
- Scholar site and Dropbox for resource sharing
- Doodle Polls to schedule meetings

Decision Making

VBFRCPC Decision Making Processes and Procedures

A uniform decision making process is intended for use at different levels within the Coalition. However, our decisions are made across the Coalition with at least three layers of “decision makers.” Together, these layers are designed to create an environment for transparency, accountability, and programmatic effectiveness.

Types of decisions generally include:

- Programmatic and research directions and initiatives
- Partnerships to join or transition into the Coalition
- Funding opportunities
- Elections

Who is involved in decision making process?

- **Management Team:** As the primary decision making group of the Coalition, the Management Team has the authority to make every-day decisions and time sensitive decisions on behalf of the Coalition using a consensus making process. These decisions generally fall under these domains:
 - Programmatic and research directions and initiatives for the Management Team generally fall under the purview of day-to-day program tasks and communications. Monthly meeting minutes will be recorded and made public to the Coalition.
 - Requests for partnership should be brought to the Management Team, which will be shared with Advisory group to discuss and enact provisional status.
 - Funding opportunities (e.g., grant proposals) can be brought to the Management Team, which will also be brought to the Advisory Group for input and decision making for next steps (e.g., open call to Coalition).

- **Advisory Group:** As an advisory body, this group has the authority to support and guide decisions on behalf of the Coalition with the Management Team using a consensus making process. Such decisions include:
 - Guidance on programmatic and research directions and initiatives is directly provided to the Coalition and Management Team by the Advisory Group through monthly meetings and recorded in meeting minutes.
 - Requests for partnership will be brought to the Advisory Group by the Management Team to discuss and enact provisional status.
 - Funding opportunities (e.g., grant proposals) can be brought to the Management Team, and will also be brought to the Advisory Group for input and decision making for next steps (e.g., open call to Coalition).

- **Coalition Partners:** All Coalition partners have the opportunity to provide input to guide the direction and impact of the VBFRCP. Such activity includes:
 - Programmatic and research directions and initiatives are central tasks for the Coalition and will primarily be accomplished through strategic planning activities during Coalition meetings involving the full spectrum of partners. This will also take place as part of Coalition program activity and decision making (e.g., whole farm planning team work).
 - New partnerships to join the Coalition are encouraged to come from and be supported by Coalition partners, especially as related to the expedited partnership process.
 - Coalition partners will be able to provide input about funding opportunities via an online process referred to as an “open call” for feedback, and they may become directly involved in grant projects and program activity as individual groups see fit. Those Coalition partners who are directly involved in grant proposals as project directors will also have the opportunity be included on the Management Team.

- Elections will be held to populate the Advisory Group. Each Coalition partner will cast one vote per individual.

Quick Decision Making Process for the Advisory Group and Management Team

When time sensitive decisions are required, the Management Team and Advisory Group may refer to a quick decision, “online proposal review process.” This generally works as:

- A time sensitive proposal is shared electronically. Members read over the request proposal.
- Reply via email within 7 days with a “yes or no” vote in support of the proposal.
- The “quick decision” process assumes that support for said proposal is given in the event that no reply is offered.
- If the majority of the group indicates support of the proposal, it is approved.

Modified Consensus-based Decision-Making Process

Consensus decision making is based on the idea that people should have full control over their lives and that power should be shared by all rather than concentrated in the hands of a few. Modified Consensus is a form of consensus that entails "fall back" methods, defined in advance for use when consensus is not reachable usually do to large group size and challenging timeframes. The underlying assumption of this Modified Consensus model is that it is inherently better to involve every person in the decision-making process, in order to reflect more accurately the will of the group. The Coalition and the teams within (i.e., Management Team, Advisory Group, and any Working Groups) shall make decisions and conduct their affairs through a modified formal consensus process as follows, to the best of their ability.

Modified Consensus Principles:

- Everyone is given an opportunity to speak, even if someone chooses not to speak (passes).
- Members shall avoid cross talk at all costs. This means that each member is given an opportunity to complete his or her thoughts and concerns without any interruptions, interpretations or reactions, even when thought to be positive.
- After discussion, the facilitator shall summarize the discussion and call for agreement regarding the issue at hand.
- Conflict may naturally emerge when people feel invited to express their thoughts freely. Members of the group shall expect, accept, and explore conflicts and conflict resolution without disruption, thus creating an atmosphere where differences can be explored and resolved without fear or resentment.
- If, after an agreed amount of time set at the onset of the meeting, there is still no consensus on the proposal at hand, the matter shall be decided via a 2/3 majority vote by those members present. Anyone who wishes to is given the opportunity to put their concerns in writing, which is included in the records of the meeting.

Modified Consensus Steps:

A. Introduce and clarify the issue(s) to be decided

- Share relevant information
- Pose question(s) to seek clarification

B. Explore the issue and look for ideas as needed

- Gather initial thoughts and reactions: *What are the issues and people's concerns?*
- Have a broad ranging discussion and debate the ideas: *What are the pros and cons?*

C. Look for emerging proposals

- Look for a proposal that weaves together the best elements of the ideas discussed.
- Look for a solution that addresses people's key concerns.

D. Discuss, clarify and amend the proposal

- Ensure any concerns are heard and that everyone has a chance to contribute.
- Look for amendments that make the proposal even more acceptable to the group.

E. Test for agreement. Check for the following:

- *Blocks:* I have a fundamental disagreement with the core of the proposal that has not been resolved. We need to look for a new proposal (1)
- *Stand asides:* I have some reservations but I am willing to let the proposal pass (2)
- *Agreement:* I support the proposal and am willing to implement it (3)

Consensus is reached when no blocks and not too many stand asides occur. Complete process with action steps and timeframe and move forward!

F. When decisions by consensus, as described above, cannot be reached through due diligence of the process, the group will be allowed to move into a modified process where a 2/3 majority vote will take place. Distinguish types of disagreement as either:

- *Can live with it*
- *Strong disagreement*

E. 2/3 Majority

If more than 1/3 of the group strongly disagrees, reopen for discussion to reach compromise with at least 2/3 majority of those present, who represent a quorum.

Process and language above drawn upon and/or adopted from:

- Seeds for Change: <http://seedsforchange.org.uk/consensus>
- Judy Lombardi at Stevenson University:
http://faculty.stevenson.edu/jlombardi/consensus_model.html
- Dukes, E. F., Piscoish, M. A., & Stephens, J. B. (2008). Reaching for higher ground: Creating purpose-driven, principled and powerful groups (2nd ed.). Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing.
- Kaner, S. (2007). Facilitator's guide to participatory decision-making (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass (Wiley).

Measuring Success for Collective Impact

The scale and complexity of the beginning farmer issue in Virginia requires broad-sector coordination and a more networked approach to allow collaboration and communication, while at the same time allowing autonomy for differentiated programming and activities that serve the goal of supporting the next generation of farmers. Understanding the impacts (and collective impact) of this networked approach thus requires a comprehensive evaluation process. A primary goal for this evaluation process is to use the findings to guide further coalition work through a “feedback loop” approach. The management team will be responsible for ensuring that consistent measurement tools are in place to allow for the accurate tracking of impact over time. Our measurement tools include the following levels of evaluation and approaches:

- Statewide analysis of farmer and educator training needs and preferences:
 - State-wide survey
 - Focus groups
- Whole Farm Planning program outcomes
 - Template survey instruments
 - Exit interviews
 - Follow-up surveys
 - Stories of success via in-depth interviews
- Coalition model and collective impact
 - Strategic planning and listening sessions at Coalition meetings
 - In-depth interviews of state-wide Coalition partners
 - Post-Coalition meeting program evaluations

For more information about VBFRCP evaluation tools and outcomes, please visit our publication page at www.vabeginningfarmer.org or contact us via email at vabeginningfarmer@vt.edu

Conclusion

Conflict of Interest

The Coalition affirms that effective governance depends on decision-making that is fair, reasoned, unbiased and unaffected by self-interest. No Coalition member, Committee member, staff or person compensated by the Coalition or on behalf of the Coalition will derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation either on the Advisory Group, Management Team, or in any discretionary decision-making for the Coalition. Each such person shall disclose in writing to the Management Team any personal interest that he or she may have in a pending matter over which he or she has discretionary decision-making authority, and will refrain participation in any decision in such a matter. The Management Team shall maintain a record of all such disclosures.

Adoption and Amendment

This working framework shall be a living document, and can be adopted, changed and modified as needed with consensus of the Coalition, according to the decision-making framework in this document.

Acknowledgements

A. Coalition Partners

AgrAbility Virginia	Rural Development (USDA)
Agricultural Development Dept., Fauquier County	SustainFloyd
Appalachian Sustainable Development	Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Attimo Winery	Virginia Cooperative Extension
Farm Service Agency (USDA)	Virginia Dept. of Ag. and Consumer Services
Fauquier Education Farm	Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers
Grayson LandCare	Virginia Farm Credit
Hethwood Market	Virginia FFA
Laurel Farm	Virginia Forage and Grasslands Council
Local Food Hub	Virginia State University
Mountain View Farm and Vineyard	Virginia Tech
Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)	VT Catawba Sustainability Center
Piedmont Environmental Council	Young Farmers of Virginia

Table 2 Current coalition partners include 26 organizations across Virginia

B. Transitional Advisory Group (2013-2014):

- Adrianna Vargo, Local Food Hub
- Alvin Blaha, Laurel Farms
- Carey Edwards, Small Farm Outreach Program participant
- Carl Stafford, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Northern District
- Jerry Moles, Grayson LandCare
- Kelli Scott, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Southwest District (chair)
- Mike Burton, SustainFloyd

Stefanie Kitchen, Farm Bureau Young Farmers

C. Advisory Group Ad-hoc Committee for Organizational and Decision Making Guidelines

Aдриanna Vargo, Local Food Hub

Kelli Scott, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Southwest District

Kim Niewolny, Virginia Tech

Stefanie Kitchen, Farm Bureau Young Farmers

D. Management Team (2013-2014):

CJ Isbell, Virginia Tech and Keenball Farm

Donna Westfall-Rudd, Virginia Tech

Eric Bendfeldt, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Kim Niewolny, Virginia Tech

Martha Walker, Virginia Cooperative Extension

Steve Hodges, Virginia Tech

William Crutchfield, Virginia State University



Dates updated: 06/2016

Contact Information

General VBFRCP inquiries: vabeginningfarmer@vt.edu

Coalition and management team questions:

Kim L. Niewolny, Ph.D.
Director, Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program
282 Litton-Reaves Hall
175 West Campus Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24061

tel: 540-231-5784

fax: 540-231-3824

email: niewolny@vt.edu

Administrative Support:

Debbie Carroll
tel: 540-231-6941
email: dprice@vt.edu

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