



**MIDWEST**  
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC  
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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## ORGANIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### DELIVERABLE IDEAS FROM THE NOP HUMAN CAPITAL CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT

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If you are wondering what some of your Deliverables may look like for your TOPP projects, particularly in Workforce Development (WFD), you may derive some inspiration from the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) “Human Capital Capacity Building Initiative,” launched as a national program in 2021 and 2022 to “support the long-term growth of the organic industry by expanding the pool of well qualified organic professionals who ensure consistency, fairness, and integrity. The initiative also supports racial equity by encouraging removing barriers to access and building inclusive programs.” Of the nine projects across the U.S. that the NOP funded, Iowa State University’s Organic Ag Program: (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/organicag/>) worked with the certification agency, Oregon Tilth (lead), the University of Wisconsin, Oregon State University and the International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA) to create materials to educate and support anyone interested in an organic certification career in our “Bridging the Gaps: Enhancing Organic Programs in Postsecondary Education to Expand and Diversify the Certification Workforce Pipeline” project. Some of our public-facing Deliverables on this project included the filming of the organic inspection of our organic research site: [ISU Organic Farm Featured in NOP Video](#)

The resulting video is available both to the public and within the Learning Center:

[Become an Organic Inspector Video](#)

You will need to Sign-In and set up an account at the USDA NOP Learning Center to view the Deliverables described below: [USDA NOP Learning Center](#)

Some of the Deliverables I found inspirational to our TOPP work included the following:

·Growing the Organic Workforce. Purpose: Materials to secure a robust, highly skilled workforce of qualified inspectors, reviewers, and other professionals to support the organic sector. This landing page contains links to several other Deliverables highlighted below. [Growing the Organic Workforce](#)

·Establishing Internships with Certifiers. Purpose: Serves as a guide to setting up and running internships with certifiers - could be useful for TOPP internships. [Internships with Organic Certifiers](#)

·Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Resources for the Organic Sector. Purpose: Module on how to create a welcoming and supportive workplace for all individuals, and in doing so, the organic sector is better poised to grow sustainably and solve complex challenges. [DEI in the Organic Sector](#)

A really cool project highlighted in this program was the “[Deploying a Systems Framework for Classroom and Field-based Organic Agriculture Education](#)” at Tuskegee University in Alabama: On a personal note, I was so happy to see the organic program growing at Tuskegee, reflecting back on my visit there in 2003 with Dr. Kokoasse Kpombrekou-A (an ISU alumnus) to help jump-start organic programming. I encourage anyone interested in seeing a diverse organic program, and the wonderful [George Washington Carver museum](#) to visit there.

In the end, Workforce Development, as shown in the NOP Human Capital project, relates to education and training, including developing curriculum, creating evaluation and assessment tools, and job shadowing or internship programs. Targeted audiences can include ag consultants; Extension; ag educators from high school (FFA, 4-H, other ag programs), college (land-grants and others offering ag degrees), and NGOs (e.g., Rodale Institute); tribal communities; government agencies like NRCS and FSA; certifiers; and

farmers with a penchant to educate others. For effective WFD, a needs assessment of the community, describing the “lay of the land,” would be useful before initiating any training, or developing training materials. What are the most pressing educational needs, according to the community? Surveys and Focus Groups could help elucidate the state of organic knowledge, and pinpoint gaps in education and support. This is an example of a needs assessment we conducted to determine barriers to integrated organic crop-livestock systems.

Meeting with organic and transitioning farmers through this process really helped focus our training materials to address the stated needs of these farmers. There’s sizable overlap in Workforce Development with Community Building, as demonstrated by this project, where farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange and peer support were essential in overcoming obstacles to success in integrated systems.