



Project Name: Managing Labor Risks via Improved Human Resources Management and Problem Solving

Project Number: RME-D1N02340

Submitted: 2/15/2009 2:33:07 PM Central Time

Project Director: Richard Winnett
NRCS/Finger Lakes RC&D Area
Phone: (607) 776-7398 ext. 5
E-mail: Richard.Winnett@ny.usda.gov

Contact Person: John Hanchar
NWN Y Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Program, PRO-DAIRY
Phone: 585 658 3250 ext. 112

Mailing Address: 415 West Morris ST
Bath, NY 14810
FAX: (607) 776-7487

Project Summary:

Farm owners from nine western NY counties face a changing, challenging human resources risk management environment. Greater uncertainty as to whether labor will be available in sufficient quantity, and quality such that owners will be able to realize desired results exists. This project sought to enhance participants' capacities to manage human resources risk through better people management and improved problem solving. Four workshops, and small study groups supported by project members provided participants with opportunities to: improve understanding of human resources risk and its management; learn and apply people management and problem solving skills; and learn about evaluating changes to their farm businesses. Forty one individuals participated in one or more project activities allowing them to identify labor risks, and reasons underlying their presence. Thirty one participants representing 23 farm businesses identified possible solutions from the set of managing people, production practice and, or capital for labor possibilities.

Participants:

Total Number of Participants: 41

Results - What Participants Learn, Achieve, Apply

<u>Result(s) that will happen by end of project</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Producer Action</u>	<u>Est. #</u>	<u>Actual #</u>	<u>How Verified</u>
1 Participants will assess sources of human resources risk [labor risks], and identify areas of concern	Labor supply, recruitment, and retention	Evaluate	60	23	Completed risk assessment tools, and identification of areas of concern
2 Participants will identify causes, reasons underlying areas of concern using improved problem diagnosis skills			36	23	Lists of underlying causes by area of concern
3 Participants will generate possible solutions to address risks			36	23	Lists of possible solutions by area of concern
4 Participants will learn from other study group reports about the changes in people management approaches, changes in production practices, adoption of technologies, and other approaches identified as possible ways to better manage human resources, labor risks	Labor supply, recruitment, and retention	Understand	36	23	Final reports completed by study groups -- what worked? what did not, and why? pre and post labor risk assessments

Project Steps

	<u>What Project Team Did</u>	<u>What Participants Did</u>	<u>Actual Number</u>	<u>When Measured</u>
1	Completes Human Resources Management Inservice Training conducted by Tom Maloney, Cornell University		3	April 2007
2	Announces receipt of grant, and publicizes project via newsletters, press releases, and others	Learn about the project		July 2007 through September 2007
3	Plans, develops, prepares for initial project workshop, including videos of effective human resource managers, and development, selection of the labor risk assessment tool			October 2007
4	Releases workshop announcement and registers participants	Register for initial workshop	8	October, November 2007
5	Conducts initial project workshop – overview of managing labor risks [understanding and assessing labor risks]	Attend workshop, improve understanding, awareness, assess labor risks, and identify areas of concern, areas for possible improvement	8	November 2007
6	Plans, develops, prepares and conducts second project workshop – introduction to problem solving [brainstorming]	Attend, participate in brainstorming activity designed to address areas of concern, and commit to participating in a study group -- 45 attend, 36 commit to participate with a study group	8	December 2007
7	Facilitates, supports the work of a maximum of four study groups	Actively participate in five monthly meetings of the study group; Accomplish goals established for the groups [prioritize areas of concern; identify possible changes, solutions (goal of five); study possible changes to the farm business [obtain information to be used to evaluate alternatives]	23	December 2007 through January 2009
8	Plans, develops, prepares for, and conducts the third project workshop -- effective human resources management	Attend, improve skills, understanding, awareness, knowledge	20	January 2008
9	Plans, develops, prepares for, and conducts the fourth project workshop --decision making [economic analysis]	Attend, improve decision making skills	8	December 2008
10	Works with participants to complete final reports from study groups	Work to complete the study group report	8	December 2008

Progress Notes

Sunday, February 01, 2009

Sunday, February 1, 2009

Project activities, excluding final reporting activities, have been completed, and the project end date January 31, 2009 has passed.

Project team members DeMarree and Hanchar have met to plan completion of the final report by the February 15, 2009 due date (15 days following the project end date).

The final report is in progress.

Monday, November 10, 2008

Monday, November 10, 2008

No organized project activities were held for project participants, since the last progress report was submitted (July 3, 2008).

Since the last progress report, project members have met to develop plans for additional study group work, including, but not limited to: tours to farm businesses that have adopted mechanization to address labor risks; and additional learning opportunities designed to help participants adopt human resource management practices to better manage labor risks.

Examples of how participants to date are changing behavior to better manage labor risks include the following.

One participant from the group that set out to study performance reviews as means to address labor risks associated with worker productivity and quality commented "I learned that it is probably more important to give constant feedback." Participants from the early 2008 session on managing for peak performance, learned that human resource management practices from the "Coaching" frame of thought, learned that constant feedback was a viable, and perhaps better way to achieve desired results. The participant's recent human resource management practices reflect the latter approach.

A second participant has made a decision to build a mechanized platform to better manage labor risks associated with worker productivity and quality during pruning and hand thinning operations. The individual participated in the study group that met to examine mechanization as a means to address labor risks.

Thursday, July 03, 2008

Thursday, July 3, 2008

No project activities were held for project participants since the last progress report was submitted (April 30).

Since the last progress report, project members received notice that the request for a no cost extension (please see April 30, 2008, Progress Notes) was granted. Project members met to develop plans for establishing and working with additional study groups through the end of 2008. Plans are being developed based upon experiences with the successful study group mentioned in previous Progress Notes.

Wednesday, April 30, 2008

Wednesday, April 30, 2008

No organized project activities were held for project participants since the last progress report was submitted (February 14). No changes, updates to targets, steps and other required parts have been made.

Study group participants from the group composed of fruit farm business owners shared favorable comments about the project with project member Alison DeMarree. This study group identified uncertainties surrounding labor productivity (quantity and quality) as areas of greatest concern (see previous progress notes), and since the group's last meeting have worked to integrate practices characteristic of a coaching leadership style into their businesses' human resources management approach. This group has met many of our expectations for study group progress by: identifying labor risk areas of greatest concern; generating and studying a set of possible solutions (mechanization – harvesting, and platforms for a variety of tasks; human resource management practices – performance reviews, and coaching among others); and deciding upon a change or set of changes to implement.

Other study group efforts are uncertain at this point in the project. Project workshops did not attract expected numbers, especially participants from dairy, vegetable, and grape farm businesses. Project members have concluded that for the latter groups, study group formation at the outset, depending less upon workshops to attract participants, would have been a better first step and helped project members better realize project targets. Project members will seek a no cost extension to the project. Via the extension, if granted, project members will seek to form a minimum of two groups (an additional fruit, and a dairy group), and at most one other. Members hope that by the end of the no cost extension period to be requested, January 31, 2009, these groups will realize value from the project as the fruit farm group has to date.

Thursday, February 14, 2008

Thursday, February 14, 2008

For the period through January 31, 2008, 27 individuals have participated in one or more components of the project -- three workshops and small study group meetings. The January 30 workshop (see below) has been postponed due to conflicts with regional producer conferences of interest to participants. Project members are in the process of rescheduling the workshop. The vast majority of participants have been from fruit farm business, the balance from diversified field crop, vegetable or fruit farm businesses. Efforts continue to expand numbers from dairy and other farm businesses.

To date, participants learned to recognize five types of labor risks -- uncertainties surrounding availability, productivity, costs, conflicts with and among employees, and legal aspects. Participants began applying a problem solving approach for continuous improvement to identify possible changes to the farm business to address risks of greatest concern. The small study group comprised of fruit farm business owners has made excellent progress studying mechanization, performance reviews, and coaching as possible ways to address labor risks.

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

Project steps have been revised due to light registration for the initial workshops -- originally scheduled for July 2007.

The timed agendas that follow reflect the revised timetable, and are the work of the project team.

Timed Agendas – Managing Labor Risks Project Workshops

Workshop 1, Managing Labor Risks to Strengthen Your Business, 30 November, 2007, 10 AM to 3 PM, 1 hour lunch, Auditorium, CCE Monroe County, Rochester, NY

9:30 AM Registration
 10:00 Welcome, Introductions and Housekeeping (Alison, John) – 15 minutes
 10:15 Areas, Types of Labor Risks Exercise (John) – 30 minutes
 10:45 Videos, How Farm Business Owners are addressing labor risks (Alison, John) – 30 minutes
 11:15 The Managing Labor Risks Project and an Introduction to Risk Management (John) – 15 minutes
 11:30 Changing the Farm Business: Helping People meet the Challenge (Alison) – 30 minutes
 12:00 to 1:00 PM Lunch
 1:00 Changing the Farm Business: continued (Alison) – 30 minutes
 1:30 Problem Solving for Continuous Improvement (John) – 30 minutes
 2:00 Labor Risk Assessment Tool: Overview, and Use (Alison) – 20 minutes
 2:20 Labor Risk Assessment Tool: Results, Discussion (Alison, John) – 30 minutes
 2:50 Wrap Up, Next Steps (Alison, John) – 10 minutes
 3:00 End

Workshop 2, Managing Labor Risks: Getting to the Root Causes of Concerns, 7 December, 2007, 10 AM to 3 PM, 1 hour lunch, Auditorium, CCE Monroe County, Rochester, NY

9:30 AM Registration
 10:00 Welcome, Quick Review, Today’s Agenda, Objectives (Alison, John) – 15 minutes
 10:15 Analyzing Problems, Getting to the root causes of risks (John) – 30 minutes
 10:45 Small group work, the Why? Underlying Labor Risks (Alison, John) – 30 minutes
 11:15 Results, Discussion (Alison, John) – 30 minutes
 11:45 Generating alternatives, possible changes to the farm business, Brainstorming concepts [rules] (John) – 15 minutes
 12:00 to 1:00 PM Lunch
 1:00 Small group work, Generating alternatives by areas of labor risks concerns (Alison, John) – 30 minutes
 1:30 Construct, Identify Study Groups (Alison, John) – 30 minutes
 2:00 Study Groups, Getting to Know Each Other Exercise (Alison, John) – 30 minutes
 2:30 Wrap Up, Next Steps [the study group work, phase – objectives, purpose, mechanics, ...] (Alison, John) – 30 minutes
 3:00 End

Initial meetings of Small Work Groups, 13 December 2007, Auditorium, CCE Monroe County, Rochester, NY -- Groups meet monthly through April 2008, dates and locations to be determined.

Workshop 3, Managing Labor Risks: Critical Roles for Improved Human Resources Management, 8 January 2008, Auditorium, CCE Monroe County, Rochester, NY (tentative agenda, subject to change)

9:30 AM Registration
 10:00 Welcome, Quick Review, Today’s Agenda, Objectives (Alison, John) -- 15 minutes
 10:15 Performance Management: 10 Things Your Employees Expect of You (Tom Maloney, Cornell University)
 11:15 Performance ... -- continued, Video, What happens when things don’t go as expected (Tom Maloney)
 12:00 PM Lunch
 1:00 Performance ...: Discipline, Wrap Up (Tom Maloney)
 1:30 Two presentations. Potential topics include: employee development and training; and using standard operating procedures (Richard Stup, Pennsylvania State University)
 3:30 End

Workshop 4, Managing Labor Risks: Achieving Success through Improved Decision Making, 30 January 2008, Auditorium, CCE Monroe County, Rochester, NY

9:30 AM Registration
10:00 Welcome, Where are we in the DMAIC process?, today's objectives and agenda (Alison, John) – 15 minutes
10:15 Overview of Decision Making in context of DMAIC (John) – 30 minutes
10:45 Decision Making: An Important Role for Financial, Economic Analysis (John, Alison) – 15 minutes
11:00 Tools for Economic Analysis: Partial Budgeting, Cash Flow Budgeting, Net Present Value Analysis (Alison, John) – 60 minutes
12:00 PM to 1:00 Lunch
1:00 Tools for Economic Analysis : ... continued (Alison, John) – 45 minutes
1:45 Improve [tactical planning], Control (John) – 30 minutes
2:15 Change concepts with emphasis on people side, aspects of Improve, Control (Alison) – 30 minutes
2:45 Wrap Up, Next Steps
3:00 End

In addition to program development, the project team has developed promotional materials. Examples appear in another section of the report.

Promotional Materials

Managing Labor Risk Project Press Release

John Hanchar,
Alison DeMarree
Material Type: Promotional Material

The purpose of this piece was to announce the project, and initial workshops associated with the project. The intended audience included: farm business owners throughout the nine county region; agribusiness service providers; and public officials among others.

This material has been uploaded to the Ag Risk Library.

Managing Labor Risks to Strengthen Your Business

John Hanchar,
Jo Roy,
Cathy Wallace
Material Type: Promotional Material

The purpose of the piece was to stimulate interest in the project's first workshop, announce the date, time, location, etc., and provide registration information. The intended audience included: farm business owners from the region; and agribusiness service providers.

Fruit Notes -- Lake Ontario Fruit Extension Program. Vol. 8. Issue 20. Several Announcements of Project Activities.

Material Type: Promotional Material

The purpose of the items within this issue was to announce upcoming project activities. Fruit farm businesses were targeted, but project members shared the material with dairy, field crop, and vegetable farm businesses that had expressed interest in the project.

This material has been uploaded to the Ag Risk Library.

Educational Materials

Labor Risk Assessment to Use in Problem Solving

Alison DeMarree, John Hanchar
Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Material Type: Other

The purpose of this assessment is to help the user identify possible areas of concern with regards to labor risks faced. A completed assessment helps the user focus on variability in quality/efficiency of labor, availability, turnover/absenteeism, conflict, and, or government/legal areas of the business. Examination of underlying reasons for an area being identified as a concern including an examination of specific human resource management related practices is the next step.

Risk Library Topics

Human Risk

Human Risk >> Personnel Management

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Hiring

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Wages and Benefits

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Personnel Relations

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Training

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Laws and Regulations

This material has been uploaded to the Ag Risk Library.

Success Under Labor Uncertainty -- Agricultural Risks and the Managing Labor Risks Project

John Hanchar, Alison DeMarree
Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Material Type: Presentation

From this material, participants learned about agricultural risks including the five areas of risk. The material also emphasizes understanding and identifying types of labor risks, and that successfully managing labor risks of concern requires change. Project members also used the material to describe the project, including project goals, targets.

Risk Library Topics

Production Risk

Price Risk

Financial Risk

Legal Risk

Human Risk

Educational Materials

Success Under Labor Uncertainty -- Labor Related Risks Opening Exercise

John Hanchar, Alison DeMarree
Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Material Type: Presentation

Instructors used this material to develop the labor risks topic further. Participants identified types of labor risks including availability, quality/timeliness, turnover/absenteeism, conflicts, legal, and hired labor costs among others.

Risk Library Topics

Human Risk

Human Risk >> Personnel Management

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Hiring

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Wages and Benefits

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Personnel Relations

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Training

Human Risk >> Personnel Management >> Laws and Regulations

Success Under Labor Uncertainty -- Introduction to Problem Solving

John Hanchar, Alison DeMarree
Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Material Type: Presentation

From this material, participants learned about a problem solving process that they can use to identify and successfully address labor risk concerns (DMAIC Approach to Continuous Improvement and Problem Solving, Six Sigma). Within this material, project members introduced and described the tool "Labor Risk Assessment to Use in Problem Solving."

Risk Library Topics

Human Risk

Educational Materials

Success Under Labor Uncertainty -- Getting to Root Causes

John Hanchar, Alison DeMarree
Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Material Type: Presentation

From the materials, participants learned about approaches to identify underlying reasons for their labor risk concerns. Participants were able to identify certain practices or the lack of practices as underlying reasons for concerns.

Risk Library Topics
Human Risk

Success Under Labor Uncertainty -- Generating Alternatives

John Hanchar, Alison DeMarree
Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Material Type: Presentation

From this material, participants learned about approaches for generating alternative solutions to the address the labor risk concerns. Brainstorming and other concepts receive emphasis.

Risk Library Topics
Human Risk

Educational Materials

Success Under Labor Uncertainty -- Decision Making

John Hanchar, Alison DeMarree
Cornell University Cooperative Extension, Material Type: Presentation

From the materials, participants learned about suggested steps in decision making, including the importance of establishing criteria, and the use of a decision making grid. Evaluation of alternatives based upon economic criteria using partial budgeting and net present value analysis receives emphasis.

Risk Library Topics
Production Risk
Price Risk
Financial Risk
Legal Risk
Human Risk

Evaluations and Reports

CCE Labor Risk Management Project Survey

January 2009, Material Type: Presentation

Participants identified concerns upon which they have taken action, and the type of action taken. Participants also indicated ways in which the project helped them.

This document is not viewable in the Ag Risk Library.

Project Comments

Describe any unexpected results of the project:

Participants did implement changes in human resource management practices, for example, coaching. Some participants did evaluate and make decisions regarding capital investments, for example, platforms, as capital for labor substitutions. A no cost extension through January 2009, from the original end date of June 2009 explain in part these unexpected results.

Projected team members expected more interest from vegetable and dairy farm business.

How would you improve the project if you were to do it again?

Project team members would focus on forming study groups at the outset of the project to attract people to the project. Initially, at the outset, people did not seem to be attracted by the initial workshop, meetings format.

What were the keys to success for your participants?

The study group project activities provided participants with opportunities to determine subject matter direction that would best help them address labor risk concerns -- for examples, performance reviews, mechanization, other human resource management practices. Project team members listened and provided support in the direction desired. One participant commented "The (mechanization) field trips (part of one study group's activities) were of great value. Discussions along the way were tremendous."

Individual Stories / Examples of Success / Quotes

For this project, project team members defined success relative to achieving project targets for improved management of labor risks:

assessment of labor risks;
identification of reasons underlying areas of concern;
generation of possible changes to the farm business; and
possibly decision making and implementation with respect to changes.

Participants of one study group are examples of success.

The group identified uncertainty with regards to productivity of the workforce, and quality of work as concerns. They focused on performance evaluation practices as reasons underlying concerns.

The group studied performance reviews as an area of possible change. In their study of managing employees for peak performance, they realized that coaching, and its related management practices presented a viable, and perhaps better alternative to formal performance reviews (Blanchard's One Minute Manager was a valuable resource for this group).

Participants from the group decided to adopt human resource management approaches related to coaching to better manage labor risks. One participant commented the project helped in taking action in the form of "starting coaching versus evaluation." Project activities helped the participant learn "how to coach," and learn about "chalking the field" and "positive feedback" as human resource management practices that help manage labor risks.

Participants from a second study group also are examples of success.

This group also identified variability in workforce productivity, and quality of the work as areas of concern.

Via a problem solving process, participants identified mechanization, especially in the form of platforms that help with production and harvesting tasks, as possible changes to the farm business designed to address labor risks.

Some participants evaluated and made decisions regarding mechanization. One participant described taking action in the form of "use of a platform to do more jobs for better labor use." Another described the decision to purchase a "new platform, and other equipment" to address labor supply issues and other issues. Participants commented how project activities helped in the process -- "The field trips [mechanization] were of great value. Discussions along the way were tremendous."

How did the project leverage resources?

RME grant funds allocated:	\$20,000
RME grant funds expended:	\$20,000
Other funds used for the project:	\$20,000
Non-cash resources:	\$0

Delivery area:

This project was delivered in 9 locations in New York.

Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Yates