



Take Root

2022

Participant Handbook



Acknowledgments



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The Learning Center

Angelic Organics Learning Center was established as the 501(c)(3) non-profit educational partner to Angelic Organics CSA farm in 1999. Executive Director, Tom Spaulding, and his wife, Neddy Astudillo, joined forces with biodynamic farmer, John Peterson, and a team of farmers and volunteers to establish a learning center that would foster a vibrant local food economy. Operating out of a renovated chicken coop, they offered workshops, coordinated farmer training programs, and launched educational programs in Chicago and Rockford.

Angelic Organics Learning Center now reaches more than 5,000 people annually.

Our [On-Farm Programs](#) include workshops, field trips, summer camps, and most recently, educational farm stays at [Angelic Organics Lodge](#). Our [Upper Midwest CRAFT](#) farmer training alliance joins more than 200 members within the sustainable & organic food system. Our [Stateline Farm Beginnings®](#) program has graduated nearly 300 sustainable farmers since 2006. We also coordinate [urban agriculture programs](#) in Rockford. Our food & farm advocacy work helps transform local and national policies.

What We Do

- **Grow Good Food:** We help people learn and adopt regenerative, sustainable, organic, and Biodynamic farming practices.
- **Connect People to Food & Land:** Our hands-on education engages the whole person, providing a deeper understanding of food, farming, and the environment.
- **Advance Healthy Food as a Human Right:** We work toward a world in which everyone has access to healthy food - and a connection to the farmer that grows it!
- **Build Partnerships:** We believe that partnerships between farmers, distributors, cooks, and eaters are the cornerstone of a healthy local food system.

Learn more about the work we do at www.learn-grow-connect.org

Farmer Training

The Farmer Training Initiative at Angelic Organics Learning Center supports and serves prospective, beginning, and experienced farmers through training in business planning, financial management and regenerative agricultural practices. Our commitment is to work with those who wish to become sustainable and organic agriculture farmers or growers for our local food system.

In our farm business and finance programs, Learning Center staff work with experienced farmers and financial professionals to facilitate financial viability workshops and to provide technical assistance and business mentoring. The Learning Center's suite of business and financial training programs includes Upper Midwest CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training), Stateline Farm Beginnings®, Take Root and Farm Viability Circles.



[Upper Midwest CRAFT](#) is a farmer-led training alliance organized by sustainable agriculture farmers in northern Illinois, southern Wisconsin, and the Chicagoland area. Farmers offer their time, talents, and expertise to help prepare the next generation of farmers.

UM CRAFT welcomes all levels of experience, whether you've never farmed before, you seek advanced training, or you're transitioning to sustainable agriculture.

Membership includes admission to annual field days, typically hosted on a live working farm. Topics vary based on the latest trends and needs of the farmer network.

You'll gain topic-specific production knowledge, hands-on learning, collaboration opportunities, and lifelong friendships from a supportive alliance of sustainable farmers.

UM CRAFT members also receive publicity in our online farm directory, access to our 200+ member listserv of local sustainable farmers & friends, a subscription to our weekly e-newsletter of local farm happenings, and discounted rates on Angelic Organics Learning Center and Michael Fields Agricultural Institute sponsored-workshops. U.S. military veterans receive free membership!

[Farm Viability Circles](#) is a program designed to help farmers engage in financial record keeping and analysis through real-world application and farmer-to-farmer conversations. Participating farmers learn about the basic farm financial statements and meet in small group settings on a regular basis to share business successes and challenges with other farmers.

Over time, Farm Viability Circle participants contribute to our collective understanding of the factors that contribute to economic viability and stability for non-commodity farms.

Program Overview

Take Root is a training program for beginning farmers designed to enhance on – and off – the job training!

Designed to enhance an existing employment arrangement, Trainers (employers) invest in their current workforce and the future generation of regional farming by guiding their Trainee (employee) in training above and beyond their current employment responsibilities.

Angelic Organic Learning Center (AOLC) staff work with Trainees to create a personalized Learning Plan designed to achieve professional goals during the growing season. Trainees expand their knowledge and experience through employer training and paid time off to pursue off-the-job educational opportunities.

Trainers receive

- Compensation for their time, knowledge, and effort shared with their Trainee
- A stipend to offset the Trainee's paid days off
- Upper Midwest CRAFT membership

Trainees receive

- Additional on-the-job training from their Trainer
- Paid time off to attend off-the-job educational opportunities
 - Upper Midwest CRAFT field days, conferences, etc.
- A stipend for educational costs, materials, and gear
- Upper Midwest CRAFT membership

Important Dates

- May 20, 2022 - Learning Plan approved
- June/July 2022 - In-person farm visit
- August 31, 2022 - Trainer & Trainee Program Documents submitted

Note: Take Root is intended to enhance current farm employment relationships. Participation in the program does not guarantee or alter an employment offer between employers (Trainer) and employees (Trainee).

For Trainees

Program Material is housed and submitted on Moodle, including the Learning Plan and the program evaluation form. Log in credentials are provided to Trainees via email.

<https://farmertrainingangelicorganicslearningcenter.moodlecloud.com/login/index.php>

Learning Plan

The Learning Plan is the cornerstone of the on-the-job training in Take Root. At the start of the program, the Trainee spends time with Angelic Organic Learning Center (AOLC) staff to draft a learning plan with learning objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely (S.M.A.R.T.). Please note that references to specific tabs and columns within the Learning Plan spreadsheet follow.

1-to-1 Prework

- Watch video in Moodle on how to create a Take Root Learning Plan & utilize the Time Tracker
- Start a Learning Plan draft and submit via Moodle
- Include on- and off-the-job educational opportunities
- Schedule a 1-to-1 Connect (typically over Zoom)

1-to-1 Connect*

- During this 1 hour meeting, you'll meet with AOLC staff to:
 - Ensure your Learning Plan draft includes S.M.A.R.T. goals
 - Prepare for the initial trainer review (see next section)
 - Discuss the Trainee Stipend (educational opportunities & expenses. See below for more details.)
 - Ask questions or address concerns about Take Root
- Prior to the Initial Trainer Review, send the Trainer a Google link to your Learning Plan.

Initial Trainer Review

- This is an important conversation that will set the tone for the season. Openly and honestly discuss Trainer and Trainee expectations.
- What questions do you have for the Trainer?
- Use the **Long Term Objectives** tab for things you won't get to address during the program.

Revisit, Revise, Track

- Throughout the program, review deadlines and dates. Are you on track?
- Note any changes or updates as your plan unfolds.
- Contact AOLC staff immediately with any questions or concerns.

For Trainees

Off-the-Job Educational Opportunities

Progress within your Learning Plan through field days, webinars, and conferences during work hours without missing out on pay. Offset fees for learning opportunities with the Trainee Stipend (see below). To make the most of off-the-job educational opportunities:

- Research what's out there.
 - Check the weekly Upper Midwest CRAFT Newsletter for inspiration!
- Plan for absences from work in advance
- Follow organizational/employment policies regarding time off requests/paid time off (PTO).
- Update the **Time Tracker** with completed off-the-job/PTO educational opportunities.*

Paid Time Off

- Refer to the Trainer (your employer) for any organizational/employment policies regarding time off requests/paid time off (PTO).
- PTO is paid directly from the Trainer to Trainee as a part of the employment relationship.
- Use the **Time Tracker** tab in the Learning Plan to track expenses and approved time off (Columns B-F).*

Program Evaluation

Once the program is complete, fill out a brief online survey (10-15 min) regarding your program experience.

- The survey link is in Moodle.
- The final Trainee Stipend payment (see below) will be issued upon submission.*

Trainee Stipend

Receive up to \$1,000.00 to offset the expense of educational costs, materials, and gear. This can include conferences, field days, webinars, books, tools, and more!

The stipend is issued in three (3) installments*

- \$350 Learning Plan approved
- \$300 Farm visit completed
- \$350 Program Evaluation & Time Tracker submitted

*Program requirements must be met. Refer to **Important Dates** in the **Program Overview** on page 6 for the more information.

For Trainers

Learning Plan

The Learning Plan is the cornerstone of the Trainee's learning and growth during their participation in Take Root. At the start of the program, the Trainee spends time with Angelic Organics Learning Center staff to draft a learning plan with learning objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely (S.M.A.R.T.).

Both Trainees & Trainers utilize the Learning Plan as a road map for progress throughout the growing season and their participation in Take Root. Prior to the initial review, the Trainee will send a Google link of their Learning Plan for you to review.

Initial Trainer Review

- This is an important conversation that will set the tone for the season. Be prepared to openly and honestly discuss Trainer and Trainee expectations.
- What questions do you, the Trainer, have about the Trainee's Learning Plan? Ask yourself:
 - Can I guide this Trainee in achieving their specific learning activities?
 - Are the Learning Objectives above and beyond the Trainee's current roles and responsibilities?
 - What is or isn't realistic and achievable within the time frame allotted, resources available, etc.?
 - What revisions does the Trainee need to make before the plan can move forward?
- Encourage the Trainee to use the **Long Term Objectives** tab for things you won't get to address during the program.

Revisit & Revise

- Throughout the program, review deadlines and dates. Are you on track?
- Note any changes or updates as the plan unfolds.
- Contact the Program Facilitator immediately with any questions or concerns.

For Trainers

Paid Time Off

Make time for Trainees to attend off-the-farm educational opportunities and meet the goals of their Learning Plan.

- Clearly articulate any organizational/employment policies to Trainees at the beginning of the program.
- Paid time off is paid directly from the Trainer to Trainee as a part of the employment relationship.
- Trainees are encouraged to research educational opportunities and plan for absences from work in advance.
- Use the Expense & Time Tracker tab in the Learning Plan to document approved time off (Column G).*

Program Evaluation

Once the program is complete, fill out a brief online survey (10-15 min) regarding your program experience.

- The survey link will be sent via email.
- The final Trainer Stipend payment (see below) will be issued upon submission.*

Trainer Stipend

Trainers are compensated for their time, knowledge, and effort shared with their Trainee as they work through their Learning Plan. Additional funds are provided to help offset the cost of paid time off for the Trainee to attend off-the-job educational opportunities.

The stipend is issued in two (2) installments*

- \$800 Trainee Learning Plan approved
- \$800 Farm visit completed, Program Evaluation & Time Tracker submitted

*Program requirements must be met. Refer to **Important Dates** in the **Program Overview** on page 6 for the more information.

Employment Changes

In the event that there are changes to the employment arrangement, stipend disbursement will be handled on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of AOLC staff. Please contact AOLC staff immediately to address any concerns.

AOLC Contact

Program Director

Kate Larson

(412)612-0545 | kate@learngrowconnect.org

- Learning Plan questions
- 1-to-1 Connect

Program Coordinator

Ritchie Wai

(608)371-9329 | ritchie@learngrowconnect.org

- Stipend check questions
- Farm Visit Schedule

Program Manager

Goli Ziolek

(608)313-4056 | goli@learngrowconnect.org

- General Farmer Training questions