



Tips for Creating Organic Certification Workshops



Steps to a Successful Workshop:

1. In order to provide a workshop that offers pertinent information, research your area in advance to assess interest by producers and consumers in selling or buying certified organic products.
2. Contact a reputable organic certification company or individual certifier to collaborate on the workshop.

Words from a Certified Farmer:

A certified farmer indicated that their reason for getting certified was the need for food to be chemical free and that being organic made the food taste better. The farmer also mentioned that it took experience with three different certifiers before finding a certifier that met their needs and that this farmer was comfortable using them. The farmer mentioned that the paper work was hectic and repetitious! But they also mentioned that although there were a lot of hoops to jump through, it was well worth it for the price you get for your vegetables!



3. Contact local agriculture organizations, state Extension office representatives, and county Extension office representatives in each workshop community.
4. Develop a rough budget. Figure the amount of time used by each employee and travel expenses to prepare and present this workshop in each location. (Useful resources: MapQuest or Google Maps.)

Draft Workshop Budget			
Personnel	Hours	Rate	Total
Workshop Preparation	60 hours	\$60/hour	\$3,600
Workshop Delivery	8 hours	\$60/hour	\$480
		Subtotal	\$4,080
Supplies/Materials			
Resource Books	25 students	\$30/student	\$750
		Subtotal	\$750
Travel			
Mileage	100 miles	0.56/mile	\$56
Per Diem	1 day	\$42/day	\$42
		Subtotal	\$98
		Grand Total	\$4,928

5. Choose a workshop date that doesn't conflict with other local agricultural events or occur during the busiest farm seasons.
6. Once local representatives are contacted, work with them to locate an adequate venue for the number of clients expected. Costs are associated with some venues. Have an alternative venue (e.g., local public facility or local producer's property) in mind if the planned workshop location is not available for any reason.
7. If a meal is to be served, locate a local restaurant for catering, preferably one that uses locally sourced, organic ingredients.
8. Create an agenda for each location with representatives from local agricultural organizations included to do quick introductions. The entities invited to participate should be local informational resources. Identify all the presenters of the workshop and provide session timelines for each part.

***Potential representatives to invite:** State USDA representatives (e.g., Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency and Rural Development); State 1862 & 1890 Land Grant Universities (e.g., Alcorn State University and Mississippi State University)*



9. Create biographies of the host and presenters, and describe and give credit to the project funder.
10. Provide any information your organization has created on the subject or compile resources from other organizations in a binder or flash drive for participant resources.
11. Market the workshop locally and with social media. Work with local extension and non-profit representatives to promote the Organic Certification workshop.
12. Create a pre- and post-assessment for each participant of the organic certification training to assess participant knowledge gain, as well as enhance understanding of areas in which the training can be strengthened.
13. Re-contact participants in three to six months to see if they have any additional informational needs with respect to organic certification.

LESSONS to DISCUSS WITH PARTICIPANTS: FIVE STEPS TO ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

1. How to choose a USDA-accredited Organic certifier
2. How to submit an application for review by the certifier
3. How to schedule an on-site inspection
4. What happens when the inspector submits a report
5. What's involved in the certifier issuing a decision

KEY QUESTIONS Farmers/Growers Should ASK Themselves:

1. Do my market and/or my principles demand that I become certified organic?
2. Is there a certification agency active in my area?
3. Do I have the time and financial resources to pursue an organic certification?
4. Do I have to pay yearly fees to keep an active certification, and does my state's department of agriculture offer funds to offset the cost of certification?
5. How will becoming certified organic increase revenue for my farm business?
6. Am I willing to keep detailed records for yearly certification?



Resources

ATTRA Publications

800-346-9140 (www.attra.ncat.org)

Prices vary for individual publications. Many are free. An inexpensive subscription to ATTRA will give you access to all 400+ publications and databases.

- Organic Certification of Farms & Businesses Producing Agricultural Products
- Organic Certification Process, National Organic Program Compliance Checklist for Handlers
- Organic Materials Compliance, National Organic Program Compliance Checklist for Producers
- Preparing for an Organic Inspection
- Understanding Organic Pricing and Costs of Production
- Organic Tipsheet Series (includes the following titles):
 - o Organic Cattle, Sheep and Goats for Meat Production
 - o Compost
 - o Crop Rotation in Organic Farming Systems
 - o Living Conditions, Facilities, and Handling for Organic Livestock
 - o Organic Management of Internal and External Livestock Parasites
 - o Manure in Organic Production Systems
 - o Organic Approach to Animal Health
 - o Organic Cattle, Sheep, and Goats for Dairy
 - o Transitioning to Organic Management of Orchards
 - o Organic Pig Production
 - o Organic Poultry Production for Meat and Eggs
 - o Organic Pest Management
 - o Assessing the Soil Resource for Beginning Organic Farmers
 - o Treatment of Sick or Injured Organic Livestock

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) National Organic Program (NOP)

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/faq-becoming-certified>

Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) www.omri.org

Publishes and disseminates generic and specific (brand name) lists of materials allowed for use in the production, processing, and handling of organic food and fiber.

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