

## Developing Leadership and Human Resource Management Skills for Mid and Late Career Farmers

**Project Director:** Seth Wilner, University of New Hampshire

**Situation:** The owners of a 150-acre New Hampshire farm, growing a diverse variety of produce, reported that they had historically struggled with employee turnover and the daily nuances of employee management. “We wasted time and effort that needed to be spent elsewhere telling people to get off their phones or explaining to employees what their jobs were.” They came to the session looking for solutions.

**Outcomes:** As a result of participating in this project the producer described several benefits to their operation:

- 1) Created detailed job descriptions - coming together as a management team to define what they wanted for the various positions, and writing it down so that their employees knew precisely what their responsibilities and expectations were.
- 2) Implemented newly-acquired skills for interviewing and hiring: intentionally hiring people

with work styles both aligned to the job and complementing other team members.

3) Rearranged crews - assigning employees whose natural work styles fit with customer interactions, while adding those who were more methodical and enjoyed more solitude to the field workers.

4) Required employees to sign an agreement verifying they understand the farm policies, expectations, and responsibilities of the job.

5) Modified performance reviews including frequent, short check-ins and letting people go if it was apparent that they were not a good fit.

6) Added an in-season bonus to reward and motivate employees which greatly increased employee satisfaction and morale, decreasing turn-over.

**Impacts:** These new changes resulted in an overall increase in the effectiveness of the farm’s labor force and greater satisfaction for managers. The farmer explained, “This was more effective than we had imagined. Taking the labor management program has simplified our farm and saved us close to 10% of our labor costs due to increased efficiency.”



*“This [workshop] was more effective  
than we had imagined.”*

– New Hampshire Farmer





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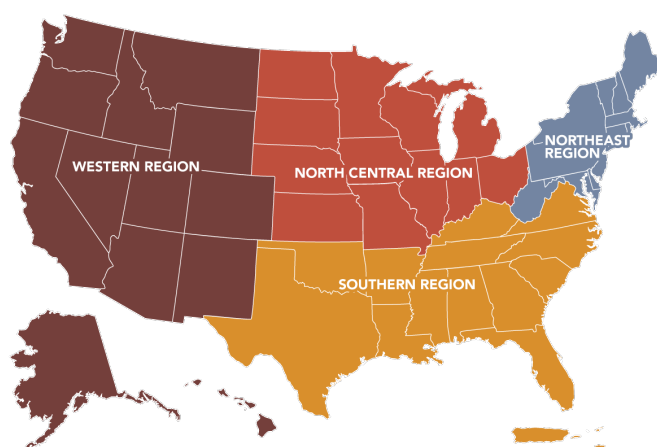
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## “Educating America’s farmers and ranchers to manage the unique risks of producing food for the world’s table.”

**Extension Risk Management Education (ERME)** is delivered through four regional centers that provide grant funding and leadership within their regions.

Projects are producer-focused, results-based and encourage public-private partnerships. Funded projects must identify targeted results that will help producers manage risk and then describe how the project will measure those results.

Extension Risk Management Education has funded innovative programs that have generated tangible results for producers in every state. ERME is committed to funding results, providing transparent accountability, and encouraging collaboration. View the accomplishments of all funded projects on our website.  
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