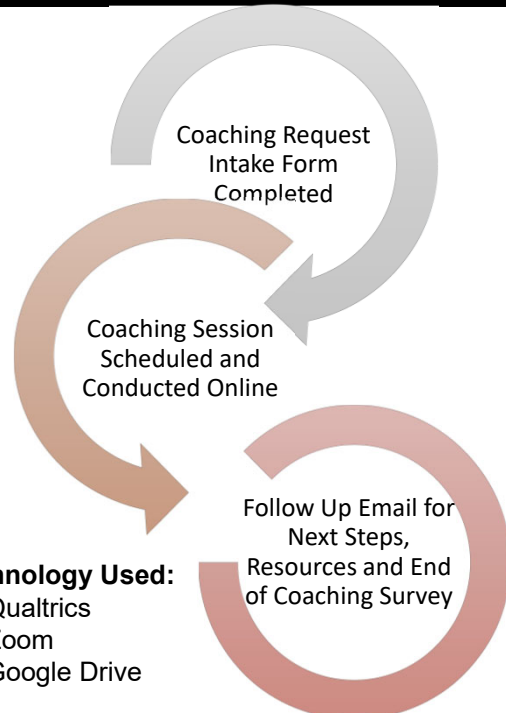


## Introduction

Business coaching is a popular practice in private industry where experienced and knowledgeable individuals assist and guide business owners in building and growing their business. The University of Maryland Extension created a coaching program for ag entrepreneurs to help identify goals, connect resources and make actionable steps towards starting or improving their business. In 2019 the program transitioned its one on one Entrepreneurial Coaching program to a virtual environment. Since then 87 individuals have participated in at least one virtual coaching session.

## Methods



## Results

### Intake – Who?

- Evenly split 50% male and female and ranged in age from 18-65+ with the majority being 30-39 years old (38%).
- 44% of participants had received their Graduate or Professional degrees followed by 33% having a Bachelor's degree and the remaining having a high school diploma/GED or some college coursework.
- Half of the participants were not farming yet (50%) and 34% were farming part time.
- Majority of individuals (68.4%) had less than five years of experience in agriculture or had not started and hoped to in the near future.
- Goals 24% want to supplement their income, 45% want to employ them self or others and 13% want to improve the financial viability of their existing business. When asked about land 40% have land and interest was mostly in crops (63%) and business management (63%) with value added being third (46%).

### End of Coaching

- Thirty three participants (38% response rate) completed the end of coaching evaluation. Participants rated the coaching session overall as excellent (93%). Highest ratings are appointment availability (91%), coaches knowledge (85%), duration of coaching session (73%) and use of technology (73%).
- Results of the session participants ranked the following: Answers to my questions 81%, resource materials I can use 79%, next steps for my business 79%, names of people to contact 76% and ideas I can try immediately 73%.
- Overall participants increased knowledge by 35% with the highest results in knowing which regulations pertain to my business (47%), knowing the next step (44%), finding resources needed (34%) and writing a business and marketing plan (33%).
- Next steps are to conduct market research (70%), work on my business plan (58%), estimate how much it costs produce my product (48%), survey potential or existing customers (33%) and seek a certification or permit (21%).

### Follow-Up Evaluation

- A follow up survey to the coaching sessions was created and sent in the fall of 2020 to all 87 participants that completed an intake form with 24 respondents (28% response rate).
- 73% rated the experience as valuable or highly valuable. The highest qualities of coaches include resources (73%), accessibility (67%), supportive (60%), experienced (36%) and connected (33%).
- Participants have written or revised their business plan (57%), investigated regulations (43%), estimate how much it costs me to produce my product (43%), conducted other market research (36%), surveyed potential or existing customers (29%), applied for a certificate or permit (29%) and acquired insurance (29%).
- Participants have expanded their business (46%), improved the financial viability of the business (31%), started a business that provides supplemental income (23%), purchased inputs from Maryland farms or businesses (23%).
- When asked about the income 40% are not generating income yet and the average income is approximately \$29,500.