

# Vetting Presenters



**ANNIE'S PROJECT**  
EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

## **PURPOSE**

To determine if a presenter will be able to live up to the expectations and requirements of an Annie's Project program.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Presenters tell us it is an honor to speak at an Annie's Project course. Our audiences trust us to use best educational practices and present research-based information. You are establishing the presenter as a trusted local resource to provide information, with no sales pitches, to participants who are making decisions.

APEFW encourages you to look for presenters, women and men, from a broad range of institutions and businesses. Recruit and meet with presenters who are knowledgeable in the subject matter and have the skills to interact with Annie's Project audiences to meet farm and ranch women's educational needs. Instructors who have good content but lack the ability to include questions and conversation while presenting miss an opportunity to maximize the learning experience that occurs in an Annie's Project classroom.

## **REFERENCES**

Other Annie's Project facilitators are often your best resource for vetting instructors. Local Extension staff and agricultural professionals are also excellent sources of names. The steering committee meeting may also generate names for potential presenters. Those who have seen the potential presenter in action can provide valuable information. Develop your list of potential presenters giving yourself several options for speakers. From that list of names, there may be people who have other obligations, or do not have the confidence to speak to a group of local participants.

## **SETTING UP A POTENTIAL SPEAKER'S INTERVIEW**

Check out recommendations of persons with whom you do not know personally with a face-to-face visit. A face-to-face interview allows for evaluation and preparation assistance if needed. Only presenters who have proven themselves in previous Annie's Project courses are secured via a telephone call or email message.

When contacting someone, explain that you would like to have 30 minutes to meet with them about a program called Annie's Project that is coming to their community. State that you are in the process of finding presenters. Make no commitments during the phone conversation.

Before meeting with a potential presenter, read the topic-specific paragraph(s) and also take a copy the appropriate paragraph(s) to your meeting. We have provided some paragraphs later in this document. You may also create your own topic-specific paragraphs that you can send to us to include for other to use.

To be prepared we suggest assembling these materials:

- 5-10 brochures for the site – Ask the potential presenter to spread the word. Brochures also show that the program is on the way.
- Topic page – The Topic page gives the potential presenter a quick review of Annie's Project. It gives you talking points and may help you win over a potential presenter.
- Example Handouts – The Example Handouts are listed at the end of each Topic Page. Depending on the personality, you might want to hold the Example Handouts in reserve so you do not overwhelm the person.
- Your laptop or iPad loaded with the PowerPoint slides that you shared at the steering committee meeting. Some learners are visual and need to see things to understand them. A potential presenter may be a steering committee member. She may want to see the presentation again.
- A copy of your updated Presenters' Matrix, (<http://www.anniesproject.org/home/media/SampleGenericPlanningGuide2016.xlsx>) in case you decide she is the correct presenter. You can show her peers whom you have already scheduled or intend to visit.
- The results of an evaluation may be helpful, especially for a reluctant presenter (<http://www.anniesproject.org/home/media/EvaluationStoryHandoutAAEA.pdf>).

## **INTERVIEW WITH POTENTIAL PRESENTER**

At the interview visit, thank the person for her interest in Annie's Project and give her a brochure. Ask her if she has heard of Annie's Project. Many people have, which helps you. Let her explain what she knows about the program before you give your 30-second explanation.

For the opening remarks:

- Explain the steering committee meeting and that the members recommended you visit with the person as a potential presenter (conveying that she is important to others.)
- Share the names of the sponsoring businesses (conveying there is a financial commitment on the part of others.)
- State that participants will pay a \$XX registration fee (conveying there is a financial commitment by participants.)
- Tell how many people have pre-registered if the numbers are good (conveying the program will make and may have a waiting list.)

- If true, relate that Annie's Project has never been held in that city or county and that it might not be held again for several years. If an Annie's Project has been held in a county or two away, disclose when and where (conveying that no one will want to miss this opportunity.)

After the introduction, clarify that Annie's Project addresses five topics: Production, Marketing, Financial, Legal, and Human Resources. Hand her the appropriate Topic Page, e.g. Crop Insurance, and say which area the topic falls under.

State that you want to discuss her being a potential presenter. Discuss the current status and ask her how she feels about a sensitive subject within the topic. Ask her how she (or her institution) addresses or supports the use of particular tools in making decisions. If you are knowledgeable about the topic, then you and the potential presenter will establish each other's knowledge and approach to decisions. This part is the crux of the interview visit, because you will decide if the person has the capacity to present the topic.

Talk about the parameters of the presentation and refer her to the methodology, objectives, and key concepts on the Topic Page. For most topics, the session lasts 50 minutes from start to finish and will be one of three that night. State that no more than 25 minutes will be spent in lecture. A lecture can be based on PowerPoint slides, notes, or literature. Remind her that PowerPoint slides are not required. Presenters can deliver excellent, engaging lectures without them. The remaining 25 minutes will be spent in a question-and-answer period or leading an interactive activity. You can also offer her the choice of interspersing questions and answers throughout the lecture. On the topic page, share the **objectives** and emphasize **the key concept(s)** that a participant will be able to use after the session.

Some people are great at sales, but not at service. You want a presenter who can do service. She needs to know her products inside out and be able to help others understand them.

### **WHEN IT IS THE RIGHT PERSON**

Assuming you have the **correct** person, she should be asking for supporting documents at this point, which you will have with you. Generally these are the handouts and (or) presentation that would be used for this topic." Tell her that participants will be receiving the handouts as well as any company-specific literature she has. If she feels that company-specific literature is better than the research-based information, say that one of the benefits of Annie's Project is letting participants see a wide range of materials to help them make decisions.

If she is the correct presenter but indicates she is uncomfortable speaking in front of a group, offer to work with her. Set up an appointment to review materials, listen to her presentation, ask questions, or

complete the interactive activity. As a facilitator, you are modeling Annie's Project. The mission to empower women also applies to presenters.

If she still hesitates, you can offer to present the materials and have her as a resource for the question-and-answer period. The correct person is likely to do well in the comfortable Annie's Project learning environment. It is low stress for experienced people who have good public speaking skills.

If you decide she is the correct presenter for Annie's Project but not for the topic you thought, redirect the conversation to a better fit. Offer to send her the Topic Page and handouts or set up another appointment. She may or may not be interested or may suggest someone else.

At the end of the interview visit, if she is the correct presenter, pull out the speakers' matrix to schedule the time and date.

### **WHEN IT IS NOT THE RIGHT PERSON**

If you suspect that she is not the correct person, you can guide the topic discussion in directions that will communicate clearly and respectfully that she is not suited as a presenter. When you are discussing parameters, stress that changing the methodology is not an option. An agricultural professional who thinks she cannot condense her material to 25 minutes of lecture based on three objectives will likely tell you. If you decide she is not correct based on her understanding of the topic or her interpretation, explain that you are obligated to visit with other potential presenters who were suggested by steering committee members. Remain positive and thank her again. You want to minimize any disappointment that she may feel at not being chosen as a presenter.

You are responsible for building a learning environment based on trust. You are responsible for creating and maintaining an atmosphere that fosters networking among participants and presenters.

You are responsible for providing 18 hours of education. Ultimately you are responsible for scheduling presenters. It is difficult to disappoint someone who really wants to present at Annie's Project. It is **much more difficult** to face 20 engaged women looking at you and wondering how you missed it with that one "clunker."

You can take all the steps in vetting a presenter and still get someone who misses the mark. If the presenter does poorly, note it in your records to let other facilitators know and do not ask her back. Be thankful it is only for one hour. Try to pull the lecture back to the objectives and key concepts by asking questions during the session. At the end of the 50 minutes, make sure to ask a question if no one else

does, thank her, and of course, applaud. If you gain time that night on her presentation, another presenter can use it, or the participants will enjoy a longer break.

Read the appropriate topic paragraph before calling your potential presenters to schedule appointments.

## **BASIC FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS**

The Basic Financial Documents session is typically led by a local agricultural loan officer. Her employer may be a sponsor for your Annie's Project. She may or may not be the same presenter for Interpretation of Financial Statements.

In some areas of the country, scheduling will vary. In the Midwest, schedule your interview visit with an agricultural loan officer in December or the first week of January. From the second week of January into February, she may be fully engaged with renewals.

She may appreciate a starting point, so make sure you have an electronic copy of the Example Presentation. Usually, an agricultural loan officer will want to teach from a financial document used in her bank rather than the Extension financial documents.

Alternative Presenter – A Farm Loan Officer from the Farm Service Agency can also present this session. Your Extension Field Agricultural Economist is another alternative presenter if you cannot find a female agricultural loan officer who fits Annie's Project.

Optimal Presentation Window – The timing is flexible, but Basic Financial Documents must come **before** Interpretation of Financial Documents.

## **CROP INSURANCE**

The presenter for the Crop Insurance session is typically an insurance agent who sells crop insurance as one of her products. The person you visit with may not feel comfortable addressing the objectives based on her sales volume and training. It is also possible that the person may be quite interested in presenting even though she does not seem to understand the basic decision points.

There is a 45-day window of interest for crop insurance. Farmers and landowners with an insurable interest in the crop must decide before March 15 for corn and soybeans whether to stay with the product and level they had in the previous year or change their coverage.

The spring price is built during the month of February, and premiums are known March 1. Therefore, being a crop insurance agent is not a full-time, year-round occupation. The level of interest and understanding is not equal across agents.

Even presenters who were approved after the vetting process made fundamental mistakes during the presentation. Minimize the likelihood of your presenter making mistakes by showing her the Example Handouts and Example Presentation. If the potential presenter chooses to use tools from the University of Illinois Farm Decision Outreach Central, she may have an interest and knowledge above average.

Alternative Presenter – An Extension Field Agricultural Economist can present this session if you cannot find a female crop insurance agent who fits Annie's Project.

## **ENTERPRISE ANALYSIS**

The Enterprise Analysis session is typically led by an Extension Field Agricultural Economist. He or she is trained in manipulation of the core spreadsheets.

Alternative Presenter – A female farm manager can also present this session.

If you elect to use a computer lab, have the Enterprise Analysis presentation during the first computer lab rather than the final computer lab. It will lay the foundation for other financial topics.

## **ESTATE PLANNING**

The Estate Planning session is typically led by an attorney. You definitely want an attorney who works with **farm** families. An attorney without farm clientele can discuss the mechanics, but will not have the depth that comes from experience. You need to schedule an appointment with her, and you need to be well prepared and concise. She charges a high hourly rate and is using otherwise billable time to meet with you. Do not waste her time.

Be extremely clear about the length of the presentation. A 90-minute block is recommended.

State that you will have an insurance agent present long-term care insurance, because she will refer to it as an estate-protection tool.

Alternative Presenter – There is no alternative presenter. It may be a challenge to get an attorney who is willing to present.

## **FARM LEASING**

Farm Leasing session is typically led by a professional farm manager or Extension professional. They are trained in delivery of the information and have much experience interacting with clientele on farm leasing.

Alternative Presenter – There is no alternative presenter for this session.

## **FARM SERVICE AGENCY**

Farm Service Agency session is typically led by a County Executive Director assigned to the program by the state's Outreach Coordinator. Your local FSA office will know who has Outreach responsibilities and can put you in touch with the right person. Once assigned to your meeting, the person you visit with will use the Topic Page to justify the time to her supervisor. Hours spent preparing for the presentation and giving the presentation take time away from her other tasks. It is important that you ask her to explain how the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides services to farmers throughout the year. FSA staff are charged with facilitating the current law as it applies to transfer payments made to farmers. You are not asking her to interpret current or pending farm policy, however, questions from the audience may lead the program in that direction.

Alternative Presenter – If you do not have female Farm Service Agency staff in your county who are willing to make the presentation, then ask for a recommendation for a staff member from a nearby county. If that potential presenter is slow to accept the opportunity, tell her how many participants will be from neighboring counties.

It is possible that Extension can supply a presenter for this topic.

## **GRAIN MARKETING**

The Grain Marketing session is typically led by a grain merchandiser with an elevator or ethanol plant. While appointments are encouraged for all potential presenters, they are required for grain merchandisers. If you meet with a grain merchandiser before the markets close at 1:15 p.m., it will be during a lunch break. It is better to set the appointment after 1:30 p.m. Grain merchandisers tend to focus on current market signals and be up-to-the-minute with their market information. Asking a grain merchandiser to step back and explain basis and how to read an elevator bid sheet might be a challenge. However, she will do well with the objectives, because she lives and breathes them.

Alternative Presenter – Your ISU Extension Field Agricultural Economist can present this session if you cannot find a female grain merchandiser who fits Annie’s Project.

## **INSURANCE FOR FARM FAMILIES**

The Insurance for Farm Families presenter (not crop insurance) is typically an insurance agent. She will generally use her company’s literature to explain different types of policies. Make certain you take copies of the Example Handouts and encourage her to include them. It is especially important to go through the objectives.

You want an insurance agent who sells to farm **and** non-farm families in a competitive environment, because she understands the different needs of farm families. An insurance agent who only sells to farm or non-farm families will not do as well. Point out the types of insurance you want to have covered in the key concepts: disability, long-term care, and health.

Alternative Presenter – Finding an insurance agent to present Insurance for Farm Families is generally not a challenge. You might have to have two or three interview visits to find one that fits Annie’s Project.

Optimal Presentation Window – The timing is flexible.

## **INTERPRETATION OF FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS**

Interpretation of Financial Documents session is typically led by a local agricultural loan officer. Her employer may be a sponsor for your Annie’s Project. She may or may not be the same presenter for Basic Financial Documents.

In some areas of the country, scheduling will vary. In the Midwest, schedule your interview visit with an agricultural loan officer in December or the first week of January. From the second week of January into February, she may be fully engaged with renewals. As you visit with the potential presenter, ask her what her employer uses as the three, primary ratios or measures. Ask her why her employer considers the ratios important and how she uses them when she is evaluating clients.

Alternative Presenter – A Farm Loan Officer from the Farm Service Agency or an analyst from Farm Credit Services of America can also present this session. Your Extension Field Agricultural Economist is another alternative presenter if you cannot find a female agricultural loan officer who fits Annie’s Project.

Optimal Presentation Window – The timing is flexible, but it must come **after** Basic Financial Documents.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service session is typically led by a District Conservationist or Soil Conservation Technician. This person will use the Topic Page you provide them with to justify the time to her supervisor. Hours spent preparing for the presentation and giving the presentation take time away from her other tasks. E-mailing her the document may help her share it with supervisors.

Alternative Presenter – If you do not have female NRCS staff in your county who are willing to make the presentation, then ask for a recommendation for a staff member from a nearby county. If that potential presenter is slow to accept the opportunity, tell her where most participants will be from.

If the NRCS staff member is also presenting Web Soil Survey, schedule both presentations for the same night.

### **REAL COLORS® or SIMILAR PROGRAM**

Real Colors® or a similar program is a critical component of Annie's Project. If you have seen pictures of participants laughing at an Annie's Project, they were likely taken during this first session that also serves as an ice breaker. The materials used for this part of the program usually come with a fee that you will need to build into your budget. Some presenters will want compensation for time and travel as well, some presenters do not. If the presenter asks for time and travel compensation, it is recommended to pay at a local staff rate per hour and the current IRS rate for mileage.

On the Topic Page, point out the objectives and key concepts. As a facilitator you benefit from starting Annie's Project with a fun activity that participants can immediately apply. You learn the participants' dominant personality styles and gain a little more understanding.

Ask your State Coordinator or other facilitators who they have used in the past. A personal recommendation of someone who has already proven themselves makes your job easier.

Alternative Presenter – A certified Real Colors® or True Colors instructor is **required**. If none of the instructors who have presented at an Annie's Project are available, email Bob Chlebda - True Colors International and he can provide you with a list of True Colors certified instructors for your area. Mr. Chlebda's email is [bchlebda@truecolorsintl.com](mailto:bchlebda@truecolorsintl.com)

Ask the potential presenter how often she has taught Real Colors® to an adult audience and emphasize the agriculture nature of the audience.

Optimal Presentation Window – The timing is not flexible. Real Colors® or a similar program is the **first** session of Annie's Project.

## **WEB SOIL SURVEY**

The Web Soil Survey session is typically led by a District Conservationist or Soil Conservation Technician. The person you visit with will use the Topic Page to justify the time to her supervisor. Hours spent preparing for the presentation and giving the presentation take time away from her other tasks. E-mailing her the document may help her share it with supervisors.

Alternative Presenter – If you do not have female NRCS staff in your county who are willing to make the presentation, then ask for a recommendation for a staff member from a nearby county. Optimal

Presentation Window – Thursday nights are maintenance nights for Web Soil Survey. If your Annie's Project is held on Thursday nights, have Web Soil Survey as the first topic and start with the interactive activity. By 7 or 7:30 p.m., the program may be unavailable.

## **WOMEN AND MONEY**

The focus for this topic is the interaction of family and farm finance. Family financial management is a critical area of success for farm families. Presenters from Extension Family and Consumer Economics teams are excellent choices for this topic.

The presenter should be able to share the interactions of a family budget with the farm's cash flow. For example, the presenter should be able to discuss using excess profit to fund retirement investments as an alternative to purchasing added depreciable assets, i.e. fund an IRA instead of buying a new tractor.

Alternative Presenter – A certified financial planner can also present this session.