



**SOUTHERN REGION**  
**Women's Agricultural**  
**LEADERSHIP SUMMIT**



The University of Georgia®

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL &  
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES



# Southern Region Women's Agricultural Leadership Summit **Comprehensive Report**

THE UGA  
INITIATIVE

The University of Georgia  
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A woman wearing a plaid shirt is holding a tablet computer in a field. She is pointing at the screen with her right hand. The background is a blurred green field, suggesting an agricultural setting. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Preparing women to lead**  
by providing a platform for  
research and supportive  
dialogue is significant in  
assisting the agricultural  
industry in establishing  
diversity in its leadership  
base, which will help the  
industry adapt to the  
increasing demands of  
the agricultural enterprise.

# overview

**Agriculture, the world's oldest industry, has been through some dramatic changes in the past 100 years.** The mid-1930s saw the height of participant numbers, with nearly 7 million farms across America. Beginning in the 1950s and into the 1970s, smaller, more diversified farms intended to feed families and communities of people transitioned to larger, more specialized farms that were fewer in number, but greater in the amount of product produced (Ganzel, 2007). Due to urbanization, research, and increased technological advances and access to transportation, agriculture became a highly diverse economic driver of the nation. What began as a way to feed a community – an industry requiring physical strength, land ownership, and knowledge of production techniques – has since transitioned into a highly diverse field with multifaceted opportunities for men and women. These opportunities are not only available in production agriculture, but also in aligned sectors, such as sales and business, biology and engineering, marketing and communications, advocacy, finance, agritourism, economics, and education.

When women serve in leadership roles within organizations, studies show that financial performance improves, employee talent is better leveraged, the marketplace is reflected more adequately, and innovation and group performance increases (Catalyst Information Center, 2013). Preparing women to lead by providing a platform for research and supportive dialogue is significant in assisting the agricultural industry in establishing diversity in its leadership base, which will help the industry adapt to the increasing demands of the agricultural enterprise.

Hosted by the University of Georgia's (UGA) Women's Leadership Initiative and the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, with sponsorship from the UGA President's Venture Fund, the Southern Region Women's Agricultural Leadership Summit brought together agricultural leaders from 13 Southeastern states and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) working in all sectors of the industry on February 8, 2016. The summit included a daylong series of panel discussions, group work sessions, and networking events focused on collecting research meant to support the leadership development of the nation's women involved in agriculture.

**Key findings that emerged as a result of data collected from the summit include:**

- 1) Women should support each other** as they work to lead the agricultural industry.
- 2) Women should formally connect with mentors** to strengthen their knowledge base, work persona, and professional networks.
- 3) Women should envision themselves in both traditional and nontraditional roles**, such as executive, board member, and elected official.

In conclusion, this report describes the summit itself; gives an overview of the planning and implementation process, so that others can replicate these activities in their community; and discusses future plans for the UGA Women in Agriculture Initiative.

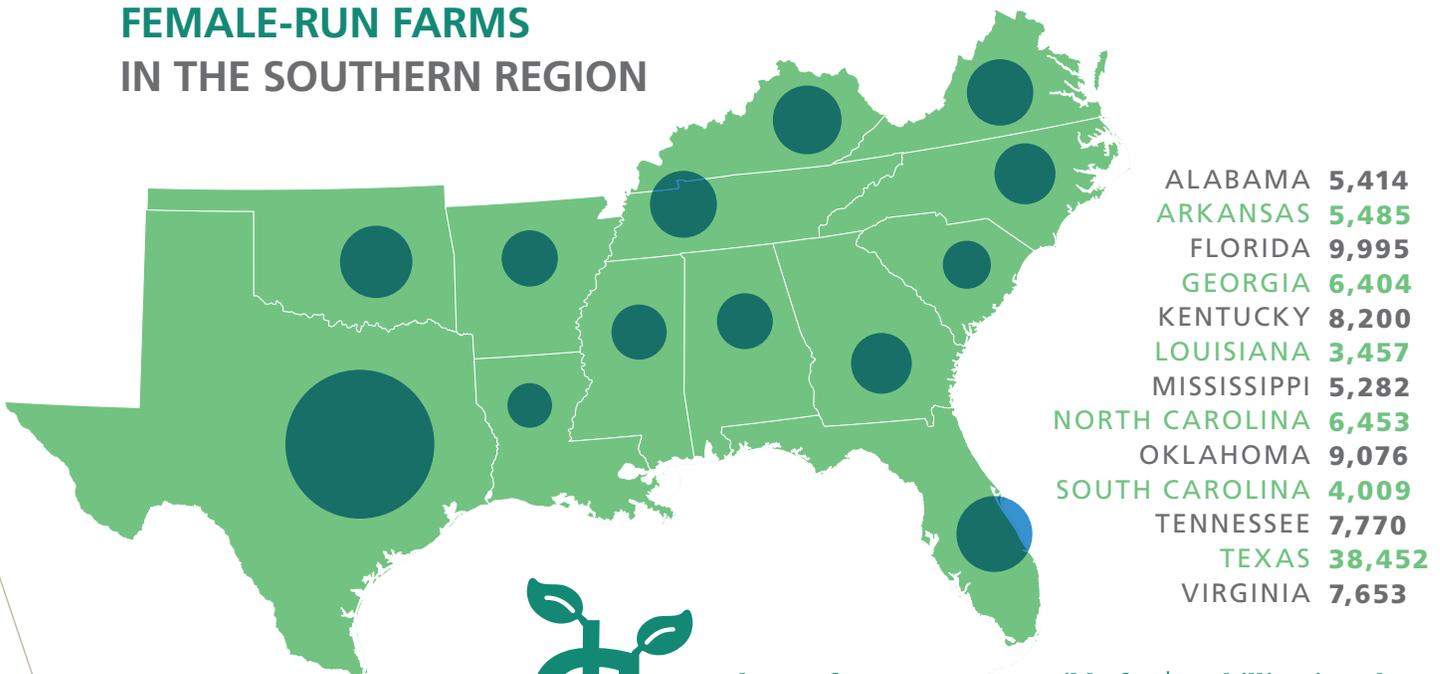
# rationale

**Over the last three decades, the number of female-owned farms has nearly tripled**, from 121,600 in 1982 to 306,000 in 2007 (Hoppe & Korb, 2013). In America today, 30 percent of all farmers are women. In the 13 states that comprise the Southern region, 117,650 farms are considered female-run. These farms are responsible for \$4.9 billion in sales, with about \$12.9 billion in agricultural product sales nationally (Hoppe & Korb, 2013). Representation of women in leadership positions within commodity groups, professional associations, and in agribusiness, however, is significantly less than representation from male counterparts.

In 2013, women outpaced men in the total number of bachelor's degrees awarded in agriculture for the first time in history (Aud et al., 2012). As faculty, women held 35 percent of positions in the biological, agricultural, environmental and life sciences, and related fields at four-year universities (National Science Foundation, 2012); however, less than 10 percent of deans and/or vice presidents of agriculture at land-grant institutions were women (Griffeth, 2013).

Overall, women in management occupations are holding steady at 38 percent, with 23 percent of agricultural management occupations being held by women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). When women serve in leadership roles within organizations, studies show that financial performance improves, employee talent is better leveraged, the marketplace is reflected more adequately, and innovation and group performance increases (Catalyst Information Center, 2013).

## FEMALE-RUN FARMS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION



Female-run farms are responsible for \$4.9 billion in sales in the 13-state Southern region. Female farm managers and owners nationwide produce about \$12.9 billion in agricultural products annually.

As the field of agriculture has become more dynamic, there is an increased need for diverse groups with excellent problem-solving skills to help meet the most challenging needs. A recent study on the collective intelligence of groups found that groups in which one person dominated were collectively less intelligent and that the key to establishing the dynamics for collective intelligence to emerge was a high level of “social sensitivity,” which is a trait predominately exhibited by women (Woolley, Chabris, Pentland, Hashmi, & Malone, 2010). Research also shows that women in leadership roles can often have a positive effect on a company’s bottom line. A 2013 study by the Catalyst Information Center found a 26 percent difference in return on invested capital between companies with boards that had a 19-44 percent representation by women and those with boards with no female directors. Women tend to make more conservative financial decisions, placing their businesses and employees at less risk than men.

There has been very limited research conducted on how to support women in agricultural leadership roles. The “Women in Agriculture Survey” by American Farm Bureau was the first of its kind to measure women’s attitudes and engagements within the industry.

Overall, nine out of 10 respondents felt like more representation was needed for women in agricultural leadership roles. While, generally, the respondents felt that women were qualified to take on leadership roles, one-third of those surveyed said that they did not feel they had the opportunity to lead. Most of the women said that they would not like to run for elected office and had little experience with the process. When asked about skills needed for women in agricultural leadership, communicating effectively and establishing and achieving goals were mentioned as being most important (American Farm Bureau Federation, 2015).

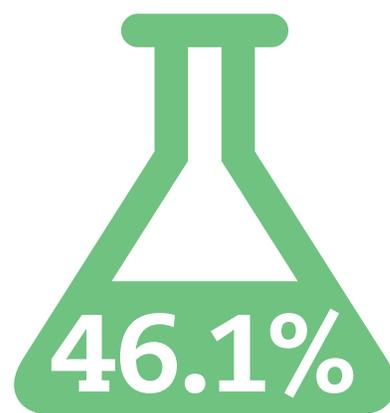
Women play a vital role in the success of agricultural pursuits. They comprise 43 percent of the world’s agricultural workforce, even up to 70 percent in some developing nations, according to the Britain-based World Farmers’ Organisation. The United Nations has placed an increased emphasis on women in agriculture in recent years (e.g., access to capital, resources, and leadership development) in order to increase production and access to safe, healthy food worldwide. It is important to provide specialized leadership development for women in order to enhance the success of the agricultural enterprise by diversifying its leadership base so that enough food is produced to feed the growing population at home and abroad.



## 30 PERCENT OF AMERICA’S FARMERS ARE WOMEN.



Women comprise **35 percent of the faculty positions** in the biological, agricultural, environmental life sciences and related fields at four-year universities across the United States.



**46.1%**  
of the nation’s 1.3 million agricultural and food scientists are women.

SOURCES: The USDA’s 2012 Census of Agriculture, Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Science Foundation, 2008a.



# summit activities

Hosted by the University of Georgia (UGA) Women's Leadership Initiative and the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), with sponsorship from the President's Venture Fund, the Southern Region Women's Agricultural Leadership Summit brought together agricultural leaders from 13 Southeastern states, working in all sectors of the industry. The summit included a daylong series of panel discussions, group work sessions, and networking events focused on women's leadership.

Delegations from each state were primarily comprised of women, but also included men, and all delegates work in varying facets of the agricultural industry, from production, to research, to business and sales, to policy and government. Student organizations, employees from the university community, and several state agricultural organizations were invited to attend the morning panel dialogue as well as the afternoon reporting session.

The "FarmHer" photography exhibit served as a backdrop for conversation as delegates and general conference attendees checked in during the morning coffee and networking time.

The opening of the summit was led by UGA President Jere W. Morehead, who welcomed participants to the campus and shared comments about the importance of agriculture to the state and its developing leaders. Dr. Pamela Whitten, UGA senior vice president for academic affairs and provost, then shared her understanding and support of the Women's Leadership Initiative at UGA and how the summit contributes to the goals of the initiative. Next, Dr. Laura Perry Johnson, CAES associate dean of Extension, greeted the participants and shared the background of the summit's development and goals for the conversations that would be happening during the day. She introduced then-U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden, now the vice president of public policy and sustainability officer at DuPont, who offered her comments before moderating the panel.

**FarmHer**  
Visual  
Photography  
Exhibition

Harden began by making the case for these types of conversations. She stated that women are, and have been, active participants in agricultural pursuits. She discussed her personal experiences as the USDA deputy secretary and the role that she has played as the third woman in 150 years to lead at that level within the department. She said that women must create a culture of intentional support for each other as they lead.

The morning panel, moderated by Harden, was comprised of four female leaders in agriculture from the Southern region: Dr. Caula Beyl, dean of the University of Tennessee College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources; Cindy Ayers-Elliott, CEO of Foot Print Farms; Caroline Bakker Hofland, CEO of CBH International; and Camille Young, vice president of Cornerstone Government Affairs.

After making a brief introduction, panelists were asked a series of questions related to their personal leadership experiences, including:

- What are some key situations or instances you recall that have contributed to your leadership growth?
- Do you think there is a formula for successful leadership? If so, what is it?
- What would you tell the audience to help further the conversation about women's leadership development in agriculture?
- How has your leadership style evolved over time?
- From your perspective, what are the most critical issues for women in agriculture today?

After the panelists responded to these questions, the floor was opened to receive inquiries from the gallery. During the panel, the women discussed their personal leadership philosophies and the journeys to their current roles. The panelists reinforced the theme of supporting one another, becoming prepared to lead from a young age, and using intellect and education articulately to earn respect from counterparts and colleagues.



The Southern Region Women's Agricultural Leadership Summit brought together women to confer about their experiences working in agriculture from field to firm. From left, Cindy Ayers-Elliott, CEO of Foot Print Farms; Caroline Bakker Hofland, CEO of CBH International; Krysta Harden, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) deputy secretary; Associate Dean for UGA Extension Laura Perry Johnson, Camille Young vice president of Cornerstone Government Affairs, and Dr. Caula Beyl, dean of the University of Tennessee College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

**“We need everyone who has a passion for the land, a passion for feeding people to think about a career in agriculture. It’s not just women, but it certainly has to include women. We want to make sure they recognize that their contributions are valued.”**

**KRYSTA HARDEN**, FORMER U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE DEPUTY SECRETARY, SPEAKING AT THE SOUTHERN REGION WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

After the morning session adjourned, the summit delegates were invited to participate in a luncheon with UGA administrators and Harden.

At lunch, Harden gave the keynote address. She discussed her career journey and personal background growing up as the daughter of farmers in rural Camilla, Georgia. Harden was a 4-H'er and the product of agricultural youth development programs through UGA Cooperative Extension. She credits her upbringing, mentors, and on-the-job learning with teaching her the life skills she needed to be a successful leader. She called for women to support other women as they aspire to leadership roles. She spoke of pulling others up and reaching out to support one another as being a critical piece of the culture our community needs to build together.

After lunch, the delegates moved back to the auditorium for the large focus-group discussions led by the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, a unit of the UGA Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach.

Invited delegates sat at round tables of eight to 10 with a trained facilitator and note taker at each table to lead discussion on the topic, "Agriculture: Issues and Opportunities for Women's Leadership Development." During the conversation, the facilitators led a series of questions around what should be "started, stopped, and continued" to support women's leadership development in agriculture. The note taker from each table used a laptop that was synchronized with a larger system that pooled all of the data onto a large screen for collective, real-time viewing.

This working meeting was followed by a reporting session led by Dr. Matt Bishop, director of the Fanning Institute. Dr. Bishop stated that the key takeaways from the working groups would be themed and reported back to participants.

To close the summit, Dr. Johnson shared her experiences from the day. She encouraged the delegates to view themselves as leaders in their roles and to continue to reach out to one another after the summit to serve as a support network to encourage success.



# planning team

The team that put together the summit was comprised of a cross section of individuals from the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) and the University of Georgia (UGA), including:

**Dr. Meg Amstutz** is the associate provost for academic programs at UGA. She worked closely with the provost and president's offices to assist in securing support from the UGA Women's Leadership Initiative and the President's Venture Fund. Amstutz also assisted with the script and protocol for university officials.

**Dr. Matt Bishop** is the director of the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development. He participated in the conversations around surrounding summit design and led the design of the research efforts for the afternoon focus focus-group dialogue, including the reporting session.

**Kristi Farner**, office manager for the Office of Learning and Organizational Development, worked as the liaison to the UGA Center for Continuing Education, assisting with summit setup, billing, and registration coordination in concert with staff members Angela Anderson, Bridget Rucci, and Emily Kretzer.

**Andrew Dill**, director of federal relations in the UGA Office of Government Relations, facilitated the dialogue with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and participated in the summit planning process. He also served as a host for USDA staff members during their time in Athens, Georgia.

**Jenny Jordan**, senior public service associate, and **Lori Tiller**, public service assistant, of the Fanning Institute, participated in the summit design process and led the efforts to design the afternoon focus-group dialogue. They coordinated the table facilitators and note takers as well as the technology for live-stream data collection. Bishop, Jordan, and Tiller also coordinated the data collection and report generation from the afternoon focus-group dialogue.

**Dr. Lauren L. Griffeth**, Extension leadership specialist in department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication, coordinated the summit research design and reporting processes, including the institutional review board protocol, comprehensive report, and summit deliverables.

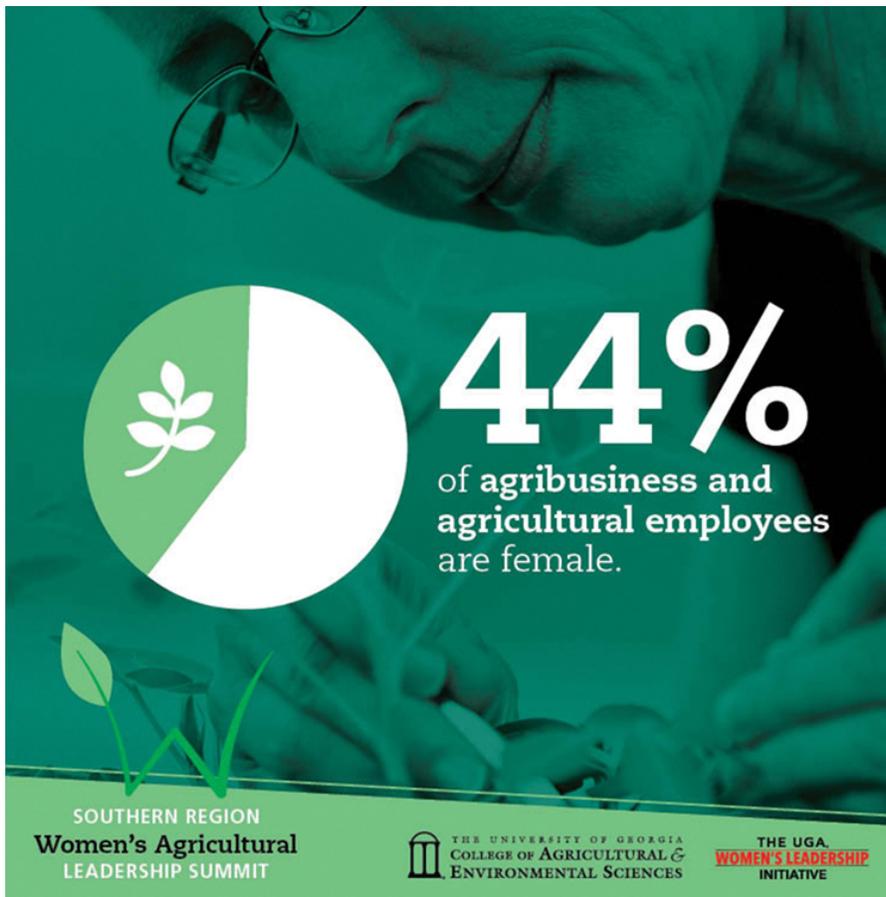
**Dr. Laura Perry Johnson**, associate dean for Extension at CAES, led the summit planning process in concert with USDA and was the liaison to the Southern region Cooperative Extension System directors and commissioners of agriculture. Dr. Johnson assisted in panelist selection and hosting special guests before and during the event.

**Angela Rowell**, director of the Office of Communications and Creative Services, led the marketing and public relations efforts, including creation of the web space, material design, social media coverage, press releases, and event photography.

**Dr. Rochelle Sapp**, Extension leadership specialist in the Office of Learning and Organizational Development, led the efforts for summit implementation, including organizing work flow, writing the summit script, coordinating and preparing special guests, and serving as the point of contact on the day of the event.

**Dr. Marcie Simpson**, staff development specialist in the Office of Learning and Organizational Development, served on the summit planning committee and coordinated the digital podcast and video efforts for the summit.

**Carla Wood**, director of conferencing and special events, assisted with overall event coordination, including the summit's relationship with the UGA Hotel and Conference Center, branding efforts, and on-site coordination.



To promote the summit, the communications office created a series of infographic-style social media posts illustrating statistics about women in ag.

# public relations & media coverage

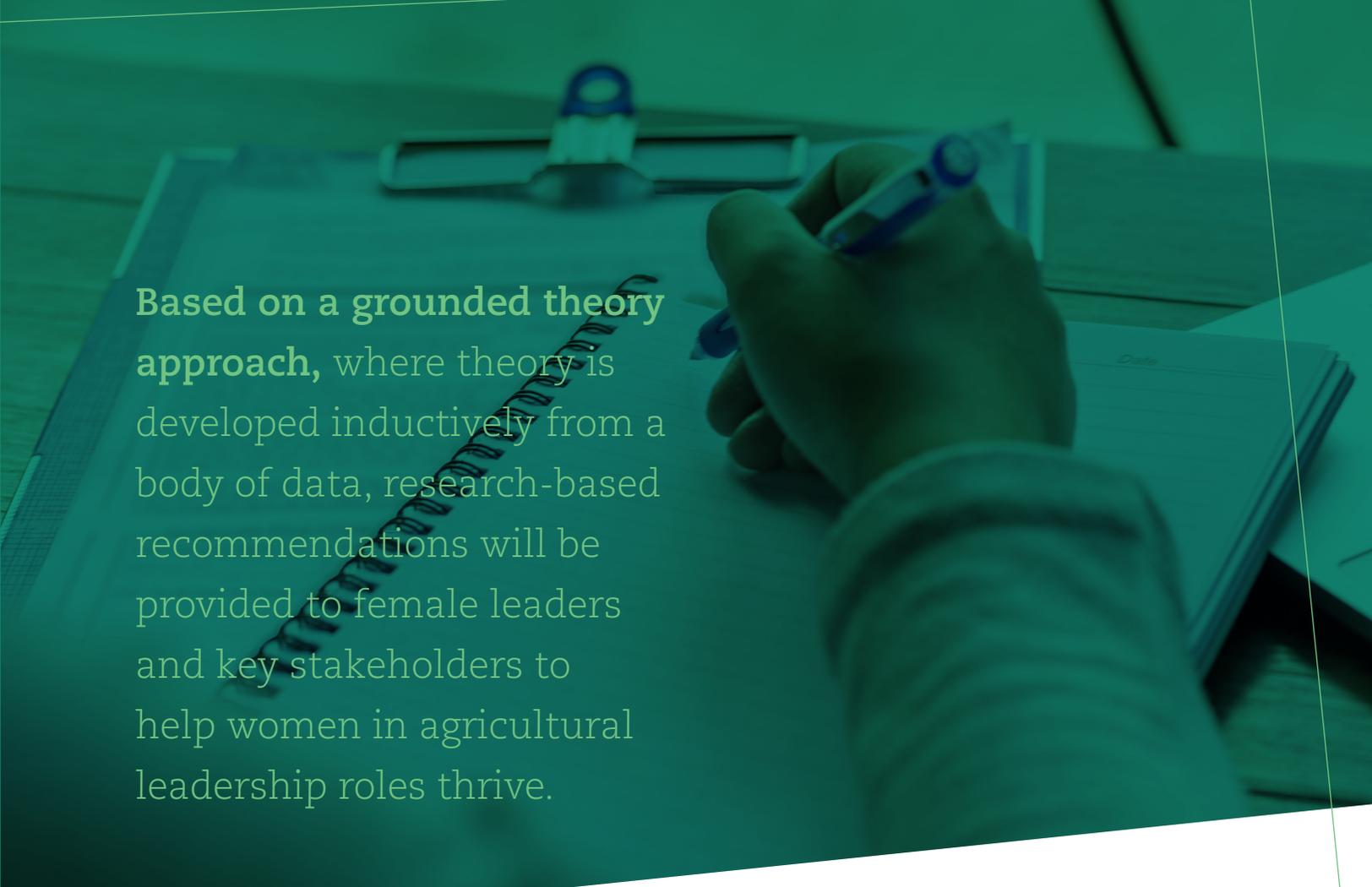
**The College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) Office of Communications and Creative Services served as the liaison** for public relations and media activities. The summit was advertised on the University of Georgia Hotel and Conference Center website as well as through CAES. A series of press releases went out to local media outlets during summit activities. Several of these releases can be found on the summit website. Articles about the summit appeared in print in state-level agricultural publications, including the Georgia Department of Agriculture's Farmers and Consumers Market Bulletin and Georgia Farm Bureau News.

The hashtag "womeninag" was used in social media

posts throughout the day as well as in live tweets and Facebook posts from the college's account. Georgia Farm Bureau posted live from the event.

The Athens, Georgia, NPR station, WUGA, as well as other university media interviewed U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden. She shared feedback about the importance of women's leadership development in agriculture. Other local, state, Southeastern and university news outlets, as well as agricultural news publications, provided coverage of the event.

A professional photographer, Blane Marable, captured moments throughout the day and posted pictures to an online Flickr album, [tinyurl.com/womenagleaders](https://www.flickr.com/photos/womenagleaders/).



**Based on a grounded theory approach,** where theory is developed inductively from a body of data, research-based recommendations will be provided to female leaders and key stakeholders to help women in agricultural leadership roles thrive.

# summit research design & findings

**Dr. Lauren L. Griffeth, Extension leadership specialist, designed the summit research proposal in concert with the summit planning committee.** The research proposal was submitted and approved through the Institutional Review Board at the University of Georgia prior to the summit date.

The research design was based on an inductive model in which data is collected and analyzed, then theory is created as a result of the findings. Mixtures of quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches were used in the research design in order to provide depth to the data collected. There were three data sets: the panel discussion, focus groups, and exit survey. Research participants were all female and were comprised of the four panel members and 62 delegates representing 13 states throughout the Southern region.

Based on a grounded theory approach, where theory is developed inductively from a body of data, research-based recommendations will be provided to female leaders and key stakeholders to help women in agricultural leadership roles thrive. Additionally, articles reflecting various aspects of the summit through all phases of development and discourse will be authored for academic journals.

## Panel Questions

**Q1.** What are some key situations or instances you recall that have contributed to your leadership growth?

**Q2.** What is the formula for successful leadership?

**Q3.** How has your leadership style evolved or changed over time?

**Q4.** What would you say are the most critical issues for women in agriculture today?

**Q5.** Some of you have daughters or sons. What are you saying to them about careers in agriculture?

**Q6.** What advice do you give to women who want to lead family organizations, but their elders or the men are in charge?



# panel discussion

**The panel was comprised of four female experts, from the Southern region,** in agricultural leadership roles, including: Dr. Caula Beyl, dean of the University of Tennessee College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources; Cindy Ayers-Elliott, CEO of Foot Print Farms; Caroline Bakker Hofland, CEO of CBH International; and Camille Young, vice president of Cornerstone Government Affairs.

The questions were created with the intent to capture narratives from women who have been successful in their agricultural leadership endeavors. Questions were designed around the following categories: avenues for leadership growth, formulas for success, changes in leadership style over time, and critical agricultural issues for women. The last two questions came from the gallery and asked about the panel's perspective on teaching young people about agricultural careers and about female leadership in a male-dominated family agriculture business.

At left are the questions for the panel, and the following page contains the findings, which provide a theme for the panelists' responses to each question.

**Q1.** What are some key situations or instances you recall that have contributed to your leadership growth?

- Youth programs taught me life skills and exposed me to different types of people (e.g., 4-H).
- Starting out in my first job with a grassroots organization (e.g., Farm Bureau)
- Having a military family that grew up overseas exposed me to different cultures starting in my youth.
- Adult leadership development programs (e.g., LEAD21)
- Life experiences have been my biggest learning experience.
- A need to improve the world; internal motivation

**Q2.** What is the formula for successful leadership?

- Exhibit grit – determination and refusing to quit.
- Support each other; work hard at even the little things.
- Pass on your knowledge to others.
- Use all your resources.
- Expand your network.
- Make your mission a win-win.

**Q3.** How has your leadership style evolved or changed over time?

- Learn to view mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Learn to not be afraid to take a chance (e.g., on a job or career).
- Learn to believe in yourself.
- Understand that you can have both – a family and a job.
- Understand that you don't have all the answers, but you can support each other in the process of finding solutions.

**Q4.** What would you say are the most critical issues for women in agriculture today?

- Women need to understand the policies that are being made in agriculture.
- Women need to have a seat at the table when agricultural policy is created.
- Learn how to view yourself as the only woman in the room being an advantage.

**Q5.** Some of you have daughters or sons. What are you saying to them about careers in agriculture?

- People need to take care of their health; people need to eat. You will always have a job in this industry.
- Help them understand all of the facets of agriculture in addition to production

**Q6.** What advice do you give to women who want to lead family organizations, but their elders or the men are in charge?

- Don't ask. Let the people know you want to do something for the family business.
- Don't be the victim. Turn adversity into opportunity.
- Be articulate and well-studied. Convince them your way should be considered.
- Go to the table with the facts.
- Remember that you are not an island unto yourself; women have paved the way for you.
- Stop asking for permission to speak.



# focus groups

## State Delegate Discussion

**The J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, a unit of the University of Georgia's (UGA) Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach, coordinated a working meeting for invited delegates**

— called "Agriculture: Issues and Opportunities for Women's Leadership Development" — to gather policy ideas. This working meeting was followed by a reporting session.

The purpose of the working meeting facilitated by the Fanning Institute was to identify recommendations about needs, issues, and opportunities for growth in women's leadership development in the context of agricultural work. The results offer input about female embodiment of leadership roles, strategies for women to succeed in leadership roles, and recommendations for future support of female leadership in agriculture. Participants answered four key questions to gain insight based on their knowledge and perspective within the field.

## Key Questions

- Q1.** What do we need to continue doing to support increased opportunities for women in agricultural leadership?
- Q2.** What do we need to stop doing that might be causing barriers for women in agricultural leadership?
- Q3.** What do we need to start doing to support increased opportunities for women in agricultural leadership?
- Q4.** Is there anything else you would like to add to today's discussion on women in agricultural leadership?



## methodology

### Collaborative Decision-Making Lab and Continue-Stop-Start Model

**A qualitative research method for collaborative decision-making using networked computers was employed to collect information as efficiently as possible from a large group of participants.** The system's software allowed participants to respond to a series of questions simultaneously and in real time. Ground rules established at the beginning of the listening session allowed all types of learners and communicators to express their opinions in the manner most comfortable to them. Participants could reflectively write their thoughts, participate in small group discussions and speak in front of the entire group at the conclusion of each question.

Summit participants divided into groups of eight to 10 individuals that consisted of a mixture of state representation, industry representation, and various other identifiers. They responded to questions posed by the table's facilitator. Individuals were given a brief amount of time to think about each question and write their thoughts on a scratch piece of paper. Then, small groups were tasked with having a discussion centered on the question, with one table facilitator to move the conversation along and one note taker to capture the information. The table facilitators and note takers were volunteers from across UGA's public service and outreach divisions. Small group discussions lasted about 25 minutes each. Finally, the small groups were given the option to share their discussion responses with the larger participant group. The written, individual responses, small group discussion conversations, and the large group responses were analyzed for emergent themes.

The questions for the working session were adapted from the Continue-Stop-Start Model (CSS), which is a series of questions that build on a common vision or goal. The method gives groups a way to consider opportunities, challenges, and current successes. For this summit, the unit of analysis was women in agricultural leadership.



# emergent themes

The following section outlines high-level themes that emerged following the disaggregation of information gathered from the note takers and table facilitators during the working session of the summit.

## QUOTES FROM THE DATA

“(We need to continue) keeping each other accountable and facilitating updates amongst groups. This is between nonprofits, government agencies, and other groups. We need to continue the communication so that we can effectively bring in women participants.”

“We need to continue discussing how many women are involved in agricultural awareness. We need to publicize the fact that we have lots of female farm operators. That should/could lead to inspiration.”

“(We need to continue) to remove the barriers, allowing girls into the group organizations at a young age. Continue to remove those barriers. (We) need to start early, (and) encourage emerging leaders in high school.”

## Q1. What do we need to continue doing to support increased opportunities for women in agricultural leadership?

Several comments included both activities that should continue, but also be enhanced in the future. Emergent themes include:

- Internal activities that need to continue: mentoring, empowering women as leaders, youth involvement, embracing diversity and recruitment, and current programming
- External activities to continue: awareness and community outreach, networking and communication, technology and social media, and building community resources



# emergent themes

## QUOTES FROM THE DATA

“Stop supporting the ‘old, white man culture,’ ‘we don’t do it that way’ or ‘this is the way we have always done it’ — this is not working anymore.

We support this notion by not challenging it. When you challenge it, you become the targeted, outspoken woman.” (Everyone adamantly agrees.)

“Barriers have somewhat decreased because society is changing, but also because of society, barriers may have increased because women may have to fight for ‘traditional’ roles in organizations like boards of directors, cattle organizations. It was always assumed that women did the women’s work, and now that things are more open, it can create some friction. That can also be directed at age differences.”

“Stop attributing success to luck versus hard work; stop measuring women by their personal image instead of their professional achievements.”

“Stop the language that we are using woman-to-woman and by women in front of men, (like) referring to women as ‘girls’ and ‘sweetie’ and taking on the domestic role. That should not be the role that we take on. We need to step up for ourselves to shift what the role of women in agriculture is supposed to be. A big issue is women perpetuating this idea and this myth of the role.”

## Q2. What do we need to stop doing that might be causing barriers for women in agricultural leadership?

Emergent themes include:

- Challenging traditional roles
- Making efforts for change and diversity
- Challenging the current leadership structure
- Increasing understanding of women’s current leadership knowledge/skills
- Changing perceptions of agricultural norms
- Speaking up for ourselves/themselves
- Challenging separations of gender
- Examining time, resources, and financial barriers

“We are seeing more and more people joining agriculture who have no experience in agriculture. You don’t realize how much you pick up by observing, so we have to create training programs for these people. For women, who are historically excluded, it can be even more difficult.”

“Ask the question; don’t feel (made) uncomfortable by the environment to speak up. As a woman it is sometimes unappealing to go into a male-dominated field, like Extension, because of the current culture. People are threatened by someone who is something different (smarter, younger, female). By tolerating this, we are condoning it.”

# emergent themes

## QUOTES FROM THE DATA

“Share success stories so that youth can understand the hardships that have been overcome in the past. Allow them to obtain an appreciation for the work that has been done before them.”

“Break the barrier that women (do not) bring skills and knowledge to an organization as a whole. We need some kind of training that women in leadership roles can use to build up future generations; train existing adult leaders to build up the future generation of leaders in the industry.”

“Resist resentment (younger girls’ paths may have been easier) and being threatened (by their knowledge) by younger women coming up in the ag field. (We should) own our personal insecurities and work to be a part of the solution rather than the problem that we are sitting here discussing.”

“Become more active in youth organizations. Maybe they (boards of directors) give money, but do not take an active role. Taking an active role allows youth to see older generations becoming involved in their organization (youth-adult partnership).”

“Make sure that women are at the regular ag conferences. Not just at the women’s ag conference. We are just as successful, (we can be) featured in the regular conference. This will help build connections, not just having the label of attending a women’s ag conference.”

“Create term limits in leadership positions; not a politically popular idea, but necessary to give more people a shot at leadership. The people sitting in the wings will never get a chance to lead and learn until the older person in the position gives up their spot.”

### Q3. What do we need to start doing to support increased opportunities for women in agricultural leadership?

Several of the themes in this category are recurrent from the first set of themes, but the quotes will show how what is already being done in these areas can be increased. Emergent themes include:

- Celebrating successes
- Empowering women as leaders
- Mentoring
- Impacting youth
- Utilizing resources
- Increasing education
- Building community awareness
- Understanding business aspects
- Support networks
- Examining time, resources, and financial barriers

“Build relationships to help young women grow as leaders; help them build their own board of directors as a networking and support group to know who you need to call when you have specific concerns. Networking builds your board of directors and you are the CEO.”

“We need peer-to-peer networks so that we can confidently talk about what did work and what didn’t work so that we can help people learn from our experiences. Something that is more private than a blog.”

“Help educate boys and girls that agriculture is more than farming – it’s a lifestyle and it’s all around us, with so many career options out there.”

# emergent themes

## QUOTES FROM THE DATA

“(We) need to bring these ideas and discussions out of this summit to the larger ag leadership community — real issues have been identified here as creative solutions, but it is not just women who can be part of the implementation.”

“We should support women in ag, promote leadership, but avoid ‘swinging the pendulum’ too far. Don’t promote man-bashing or penalize promising young men who can do great things in ag.”

“We discussed empowering each other, but the thing that stays in my mind is mentioning the next generation so we aren’t having the same conversation in 25-50 years.”

## Q4. Is there anything else you would like to add to today’s discussion on women in agricultural leadership?

Themes were consistent with previous discussions, but help to narrow in on future activities and gatherings. Emergent themes include:

- Gender diversity
- Leadership
- Raising agricultural awareness
- Opportunities for involvement
- Empowering women in agriculture
- Utilizing resources and increasing communication
- Conference suggestions and ideas

“This forum should be continued and moved throughout the Southeast. I would like to see a session on work-life balance. I would like to involve younger ladies too; 4-H, FFA/FHA. Also, more women from government should be included. This was a great event!”



# exit survey

## REPLIES TO OPEN-RESPONSE QUESTIONS

### What did you learn as a result of your participation in the summit?

“I learned how to have a stronger voice for agriculture (and) how to change how I am in group settings to not be labeled or held back as a woman.”

“The event was incredibly empowering and provided some excellent guidance on what it takes to be a leader in your field.”

“The diversity of talented women in leadership roles in agriculture is amazing.”

“Impressive ways people are making a difference; value of different kinds of messaging; breadth of interests for the participants”

“To empower more women”

“Being a woman in ag provides visibility that we should use to our advantage. Smack the good old boy network with knowledge.”

“I learned so much from the ladies that shared their experiences. Dr. Beyl from Tennessee has really served as an inspiration. I believe that middle-aged career professionals and young professionals need to hear about how difficult and how critical it is to seek and take leadership positions.”

**The delegates were invited to complete an exit survey for the summit;** 16 responses were collected of 62 delegates, which is a response rate of 25 percent of the target population.

Findings from the exit survey concluded that, of the participants who responded, the luncheon keynote speaker was the most highly rated session – 4.63 (out of 5) – followed by the panel discussion – 4.44 (out of 5) – with the overall summit experience rating 4.44 (out of 5). The reporting session received the lowest ranking with a 3.6 (out of 5).

Respondents stated that there was a moderate (3.5 out of 5) likelihood that they would host a similar event in their sphere of influence. In the comments section of that question, two participants stated that they are extremely likely to host a similar event, while three participants mentioned that they have a similar women’s event they will augment with this programming, and two participants said they are unlikely to replicate this type of event.

Comments from the luncheon keynote speaker included:

- “Great speaker! Very motivational.”
- “Best I have ever heard for a lunch speaker – for both information and inspiration.”

## What information can you take back to your state?

“Use of technology, a moderator, and someone to take notes during the discussion. The importance of leadership skills and working together with other agencies to accomplish goals”

“Panelist format and breakout session format. Also other models for how to engage females in leadership roles”

“Contacts; plans to visit when another participant is in town; women’s leadership investment by University (of Georgia)”

“That it was an awesome conference, just needed to be longer.”

“Discussion with our state’s participants post-summit was useful in thinking about other things we might do.”

“Being part of this event has allowed me to share what happened with other colleagues, and they are very excited about the possibility to organize and attend a similar event.”

## How has your view of women’s leadership in agriculture changed as a result of your participation in the summit?

“I believe we need to make change in order for change to occur. I look forward to being a part of the discussion to make those changes occur.”

“The event reinvigorated me to make this more of a priority in my programming.”

“I think my view is more skewed. There are many women who truly had to fight to be recognized for their work, and a lot of these women still feel like they have to fight. I have never felt discriminated against in agriculture. I’ve only felt support from other men and women. I hope that women in the generation that had to fight will soon recognize and appreciate how much they have succeeded instead of continuing to pick fights.”

“More energized”

“We need to quit doubting ourselves and step up and not wait to be asked to be involved. If we want to be involved, we just need to do it.”

“Not sure that it changed ... Despite some progress over my career, women remain underrepresented in many top positions.”

“I feel that there is a real responsibility to serve in agriculture while keeping an eye on opportunities to lead and take things to the next level.”

## How has your perspective of yourself as a leader changed as a result of participating in this summit?

“I still need to grow as a leader in order to mentor others to be leaders.”

“It reinforced my beliefs and empowered me to continue working hard to provide opportunities for other females around me to thrive.”

“Not really changed”

“I feel I am stronger and ready to take care of business. I feel empowered and rejuvenated.”

“Feel more responsibility to do more as a mentor rather than only serve as an example”

“It has reiterated that I need to strengthen my leadership skills and not let traditional roles define what I do in the future.”



# main themes

from Data Collected

**In conclusion, themes from the data that emerged as a result of these data sets were:**

1. Women should support each other as they work to lead in the agricultural industry.
2. Women should formally connect with mentors to strengthen their knowledge bases, work personas, and professional networks.
3. Women should envision themselves in both traditional and nontraditional roles, such as executive, board member and elected official.



# key recommendations

## For women:

- Seek both formal and informal leadership development opportunities from a young age in order to shape yourself and your perspectives for leadership.
- Continue developing your leadership skills into adulthood through adult leadership programs, board service, and leadership in professional associations.
- Find a seat at the leadership table where important decisions are being made regarding your area of influence.
- Become highly competent in your area of expertise and situate yourself in places to offer input, advice, and recommendations to key stakeholders.
- Believe that you can have both – a satisfying family environment and leadership in the workplace; although it's sometimes difficult, it can be managed with the help of your support network and self-forgiveness when you fall short of perfection in some tasks.
- Find an intentional way to support other women in the workplace, in professional associations or in youth organizations through mentoring or sponsorship.
- Build meaningful relationships with individuals who are successful in their leadership roles, both men and women, and learn from their experiences.

## For key stakeholders:

- Leadership development is a lifelong process that lasts from youth into adulthood. Invest in formal leadership development opportunities (e.g., 4-H, FFA, LEAD21, the Food Systems Leadership Institute) for women of all ages in order to help them develop their skill sets.
- Understand the importance of diverse boards of directors in order to gain broader perspectives in decision-making for your organization.
- Seek out highly qualified women to serve in leadership roles in your organization.
- Employers, think of ways to offer support for women who are managing work-life interaction in different life stages (e.g., serving as caretakers for young children or elderly parents).
- Create an environment that is conducive for women to share their ideas, thoughts, and experiences by being open to input and asking directly for feedback.
- Recognize the efforts of women who are doing outstanding work within your organization through offering work-based rewards, praise, and support.

# moving forward

## Replicating the Summit in Your Community

**The Southern Region Women’s Agricultural Leadership Summit could be replicated in a similar forum in your community.** Thoughtful strategy and planning could take anywhere from six to 12 months in an ideal timeframe, but in our case, the timeline was four months from deciding to move forward to the actual summit date. Using these resources as a guide while still having the flexibility to create what works best in your community (i.e., timeframe, budget, topics, etc.) could be the key to planning this type of conversation. We encourage you to get buy-in from key stakeholders and high-level individuals at the very beginning of the process. Find the people who care about this conversation and reach out to them. Decide if a “summit-like” activity is appropriate for your audience. Ask questions of your community to see if there is buy-in from potential attendees, challenges, and current successes. For this summit, the unit of analysis was women in agricultural leadership.

### Organizing Your Team

**When thinking through organization of your team, begin by making a list of key individuals who have a genuine passion for this area of work;** then, think through the different types of roles needed to accomplish all of the tasks, from summit conception to completion. Form a leadership team based on this list that will take ownership of and responsibility for the project.

If you will be partnering with another organization, such as a federal agency, define those roles and relationships from the beginning. In our case, within a university setting, the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences provided the lead on the conceptual framework, conference planning, public relations, project implementation, and research design, while partner units provided connections to university priorities, support for data collection, and facilitated dialogue with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Overall, choose team members who are positive, driven, task-oriented, and display a diverse skill set. Team meetings should be organized with an agenda, and workflow distributed and discussed in order to make sure that everyone is confident in their ability to carry out assigned tasks.

## Organizing Your Objectives and Outcomes

**When organizing your objectives and the outcomes of your summit, start by asking the key question, “What do we want to accomplish as a result of this day?”** Think about your summit as a tool to further the conversation about women’s leadership development in your area of influence. Accomplishments could include bringing people together to dialogue about women’s leadership development in agriculture, or it could be that you want to develop strategies to support women in your area. Whatever the case may be, beginning with the end in mind will help you create the objectives needed to reach your targeted goal.

Once you set your desired final outcomes, work backward to create steps or objectives to reach this goal. For example, we wanted to create a set of deliverables including recommendations for women and key stakeholders on women’s leadership development in the context of agricultural work. We knew that we had to collect research to provide relevant recommendations. We needed to design our questions for the panel discussion and the subsequent focus group session to revolve around those outcomes.

Finally, when organizing your objectives, keep in mind what is realistic for a daylong event. Maximize time where you can for added networking opportunities; think of ways to engage your audiences outside the structured session time. Decide if you want your event to take the tone of hosting a dialogue, collecting data, or serve as a professional development experience.

## Scheduling Vendors

**When scheduling your vendors, we suggest working to find a trusted and convenient location with everything in one place.** Consider vendors you might have an existing relationship with who are passionate about the work you are doing and are offering services within your price point.

The University of Georgia (UGA) Hotel and Conference Center on campus was our choice due to its convenience and access to our facilities. A large conference area for our meeting space, meals, hotel rooms for guests, and everything that was needed could be found in this single location. Handicapped accessibility, wireless internet, and transportation to and from the Atlanta airport via Groome Transportation are features that also made our campus hotel the best choice for our event.

## Selecting Your Target Audience

**Choosing the target audience might be understood more clearly depending on the type of outcomes that the leadership team designates for the summit.** Does your summit have a regional or local focus? Does your summit focus on professional organizations/associations or producers? Does the leadership team desire a general audience to come and be a part of the conversation?

Being thoughtful about the summit outcome will allow for appropriate invitations to be created and disseminated through pertinent channels three to six months in advance of your summit date. For our purposes, the Cooperative Extension System’s Southern states were selected as an appropriate target audience. We felt that approximately three to five representatives from each state would keep our conversations intimate, yet provide adequate diversity in the dialogue.

We reached out to Southern region Extension directors, state agriculture commissioners, and Farm Bureau presidents to recommend and recruit delegates. Choosing a diverse state delegation should begin by thinking about dynamic individuals who are passionate about leadership and work in the agricultural and environmental sciences sectors. State delegations need not be exclusively women, but selected participants should have experience and passion about furthering the discussion of women’s leadership development in the context of agriculturally based work.

If you are inviting delegates, please consider the depth and breadth of individuals – i.e., who among these individuals are key stakeholders in your state’s agricultural enterprise: academia including teaching, research, and service; producers; corporations; legislators; government agencies; private industry; commodity trade associations; and nonprofit organizations. We feel delegates should represent a wide variety of occupations, life stages, and socioeconomic, ethnic, and professional backgrounds in order to contribute to this conversation that will inform women’s leadership in agriculture.

## Selecting and Preparing Panel Members

**When selecting a panel, think through how the panelists may further the dialogue about women's leadership in your area of influence.** Consider professional and personal backgrounds, diversity, and their abilities to connect with the target audience.

For our summit, choosing panel members was a very difficult task; the wonderful pool of highly accomplished and well-regarded women in our Southern region agricultural network was quite large. We began by having the committee and partners at the USDA list women that we knew personally for the list of candidates to be considered. Then, we researched outstanding women from across the Southern region who are highly involved in agricultural work.

We created a master list of around 25 women, and then reduced this to a smaller list of around 15 women, creating a biographical sketch of each individual that put them in areas of service by job type. We then looked more closely at our list and broke it down even further to make sure we had representation from a wide variety of sectors (e.g., corporations, higher education, producers, government, trade associations). We created a list that would provide a diverse panel with all facets of representation, including ethnicity and cultural background.

Once we had a short list of 14 or so potential panelists, we reached out to a few of them to check their availability and interest in serving at the summit. Then, the women were vetted through university channels and the USDA. Eventually, four women were chosen and invited to be panelists for the event. This process took approximately two months.

Panelists were prepared, by email, with an outline of questions that was given to them several weeks in advance so that they could adequately prepare. The women were also invited to attend a breakfast the morning of the event with USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden and Dr. Laura Perry Johnson, UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) associate dean for Extension, to establish rapport and begin talking about women's leadership. The breakfast event was an important time for bonding and relationship building before the event.



## Selecting a Keynote Speaker

**Choosing a speaker is a very integral part of the summit activities.** As the keynote speaker was the highest-rated session in our summit, we understand the importance of having a speaker that is well in tune with the target audience. Choosing someone with a clear message aligned with the objectives of your summit is perhaps the most important piece in planning. If you are partnering with an organization, start thinking of their employee base first. Having someone who has years of field experience, or a moving professional story, could be the type of person you are looking for to serve in this role.

Talk with the speaker first in order to prepare them for the event. Communicate with the speaker about the importance of their message and how you would like for their talk to work in concert with the desired outcome of the event.

## Organizing a Focus Group Discussion

**The afternoon session at our summit was designed to collect research data from the participants in a focus group-style discussion format.** As previously stated in the report, we prepared our questions in advance and also prepared our facilitators and note takers in regard to the dialogue process and their roles. Focus groups were broken out into tables of eight, with a facilitator and note taker at each table to inspire and record the dialogue.

For your event, consider your proposed outcome and objectives as you decide what type of afternoon activity would have the most impact. If you are designating a time for dialogue and conversation, perhaps a discussion in small groups with table topics might be a good fit. Whatever the designed outcome, it is always a good idea to record conversations; subsequently, important messages to stakeholders or action items might result from something said at one of the tables. It is also important to consider the conversational tone, as, naturally, individuals can get rerouted and discuss items not relevant to the topics at hand. Ensure that your dialogue is closely guided by giving short time windows in which to discuss topics, and have trained individuals serving as facilitators in order to keep the dialogue on track.

## Planning Public Relations and Media

**Deciding on the core messaging early is an important component in establishing a consistent story to be communicated through public relations and media.** A media plan should be developed as a part of the tasks of summit planning. Ideally, an individual with expertise in communications strategy should take the leadership role in designing this piece of the process. Decide on key places where communication should occur and develop a timeline for project implementation. Think through all forms of media that the group would like to utilize and begin to draw up a comprehensive framework.

Social media, including the Facebook and Twitter platforms, are free ways to engage an audience. Connect with local media outlets and organizations that may want to feature your summit (e.g., Farm Bureaus, state departments of agriculture, universities). USDA has popularized the hashtag “womeninag” and it was used throughout the event. There may be other opportunities for your team to create something significant as a result of your meeting design.

The logo features a green leaf on the left, with a dark green line extending from its base to form a stylized 'W' shape. The text 'UGA' is in a bold, green, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol. Below it, 'Women in Agriculture' is written in a larger, green, sans-serif font. At the bottom, 'LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE' is in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

# UGA<sup>®</sup> Women in Agriculture LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

## The UGA Women in Agriculture Initiative and Next Steps

**Many excellent ideas were generated as a result of this initial conversation and research collected at the summit.** In order to continue to provide a platform for our own agriwomen to connect and professionally develop, we are creating the UGA Women in Agriculture Leadership Initiative. Established by CAES and UGA Extension, the goal of this initiative is to expand individual networks, foster a better understanding of the vast scope of agricultural work, promote collaborations, enhance friendships, and provide support.

The initiative will launch by hosting a quarterly, brown-bag, leadership lunch series featuring women working in various facets of agriculture. The first luncheon date, May 11, 2016, will feature Dr. Maria Navarro, associate professor in the CAES Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication, and Dr. Kristen Navara, associate professor of endocrinology in the CAES Department of Poultry Science. Drs. Navarro and Navara will discuss their research and provide an opportunity for dialogue. Their talk will be broadcast live to UGA campuses in Griffin and Tifton, Georgia.

We are extending an invitation to all those who work in similar fields within the university community and beyond. While we plan to feature female leaders in agricultural positions, these gatherings are definitely not limited to women. All faculty, staff, and students, as well as other interested individuals outside of the university, are invited to join.

In addition to developing these key findings from the summit data and recommendations for women and stakeholders, and delivering this comprehensive report, we will be working to publish articles in several academic journals in the coming months. These articles will contribute to literature focused on women in agricultural leadership in order to create research-based recommendations for women to thrive, in turn helping the world's oldest industry diversify its leadership base to handle global challenges not only today, but in the years to come.

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