

**Are you a former farmer willing to share your experiences of moving off the land?
Are you interested in being trained as a Beyond Farming Mentor?
Do you have some time to volunteer to help farmers who want to talk about what's
involved in leaving a farm business?**

What is Beyond Farming about?

[The Western Australian Council of Social Service \(WACOSS\)](#) is looking for former farmers willing to provide mentoring support and information to other farmers and farming families who may be interested in hearing about opportunities available outside farming.

The goal of the program is to assist current farmers with their planning, through people who know farming and can identify with the issues that might arise for families in moving from the farm.

As a volunteer Beyond Farming Mentor you will work as part of a small team and will have the opportunity to speak with and visit farmers in the drought pilot region of Western Australia. You will be trained and provided with the necessary support to carry out this important role. You will be reimbursed for all approved expenses.

If you are a former farmer willing to offer your time, experience and knowledge, we would like to hear from you. Either call (08) 1800 616 076 or [click here to contact us via email](#)

What is involved in being a Beyond Farming Mentor?

You will be trained to speak with and visit farmers in the [drought pilot region of Western Australia](#). This is a voluntary role and mentors will be reimbursed for approved phone, travel and accommodation expenses and provided with the necessary support to carry out this important role.

The key part of the mentor's role is to be available to meet face to face or talk by phone with current farmers and their families who have registered their interest in speaking with a former farmer. Your role will not be about providing advice or counselling but, rather, to share your experiences.

Volunteers can be male or female or a couple – retired or employed. Your contribution will depend on your interests, abilities and availability.

Activities would include:

- Being available to talk to current farmers either by phone or face to face to discuss issues in relation to succession and moving from the farm, based on experience.
- Being able to respond to informal, ad hoc queries from the public about the Beyond Farming Program and your role.
- Attending training to help you in this important role.
- Maintaining open lines of communications with the Beyond Farming Program Officer at WACOSS.

- Providing basic information on where farmers can access further assistance if required.

Who can be a Beyond Farming Mentor?

Beyond Farming Mentors can be former farmers who have taken up rewarding new work and/or life opportunities for themselves and their families. We are particularly interested in former farmers' new ventures in any retraining, new employment or business and lifestyle changes in retirement.

You can be male or female and may still be working in the agricultural industry in some capacity.

You need to be willing to share your story with interested farmers and to meet with them.

You also need to have good communication skills and an ability to develop rapport with farmers. You do not have to live in the pilot region but preferably live in Western Australia.

Men and women who have owned and operated an agricultural property anywhere in Australia within the past 10 years, but no longer do so, qualify as former farmers.

Can a husband and wife both volunteer?

Yes! We think that having couples involved would be great and also open the opportunity for more current farmers and their families to get involved. If signing up as a couple you may be matched as a couple or individually with a current farming family. It will really depend on who makes the enquiry and contacts the Beyond Farming Program Officer at WACOSS

What does a Beyond Farming Mentor do?

Share your experiences and tell your story about moving out of farming.

And listen. That is the key to it all. Former farmers will be trained on what to do and what not to do so they can make the most of the relationship with the current farmers. Being someone who has been in a similar situation will be very helpful. You can share your experiences and be yourself. Respecting confidentiality and privacy will also help develop the trust that will be critical to the relationship.

[A little bit more information...](#)

Training and support

Free training will be provided by WACOSS on all the skills and information that will help you be a Beyond Farming Mentor. It will include instructions on your role, communication tips, information on relevant services for farmers and how to access them and other specific issues you think would be important to help interested farmers.

Training will be over two days in Perth. The first is planned for late August 2010. All travel,

accommodation and meals will be funded by WACOSS for those selected.

WACOSS will also provide ongoing support to help you in this role, including for any referrals to professional or independent advisers if required in the course of your discussions with farmers. You will be able to contact WACOSS at any time.

How much time is involved?

The amount of time you are able to spend and the specific activities you undertake are flexible.

How do we meet current farmers?

There will be a series of public events and promotional activities informing the current farmers of the program. Interested farmers will be able to contact the Beyond Farming Program Officer and request that a former farmer contact them.

We will match you with farmers according to their circumstances and location and your experience, knowledge and location. Our role will primarily be to support you in this work, especially if you need advice or to follow up on information that a current farmer is seeking.

Matching will take into account things such as whether someone wants to talk to a person in a similar sector of farming, the same geographical location or whether they might feel more comfortable with someone who won't know their personal circumstances. All people have different requirements so we will be doing our best to meet everyone's needs to make the best match possible.

Of course if you meet or know some current farmers and they want to get involved in the program, we would like to hear about it so we can find the best way to help them.

Where do we meet?

Where you meet is up to the current farmer and you. Communication may include email, phone or face to face meetings. WACOSS will cover approved expenses incurred by you in speaking with and meeting farmers.

Opportunity for input into the Beyond Farming program

As this is a pilot program, you may be invited to provide input – such as through providing information and feedback on your contacts with farmers and joining in a discussion forum. Hearing about your experiences along the way will also be useful in promoting the program to more people.

How do I register my interest?

Complete an [Expression of Interest](#), call the WACOSS Beyond Farming Program Officer on 1800 616 076 or email beyondfarming@wacoss.org.au to find out more.