

Virtual Versus In-Person Meetings: What Works Best?

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Photo courtesy of Eurac Research – Annelie Bortolotti.
World Congress on Agritourism, Bolzano, Italy 2024

POLL: Describe yourself.

- Farmer / Rancher
- Extension / Service Provider
- Non-profit
- Government
- Educator
- Researcher
- Tourism Professional
- Business Owner / Manager
- Other



Introduction



- Collaboration is vital for rural communities
- Networking fosters collaboration among agritourism operators
- Events enhance networking, capacity building, and innovation
- Creating, growing, and maintaining these networks is a challenge



Photo courtesy of Green Mountain Girls Farm, Vermont

Key benefits of Events



- + Virtual: Cost-effective, inclusive, scalable
- + In-Person: Stronger relationship-building and immersion
- + Hybrid: Balances reach and interaction quality, can be very expensive

(Stefanoudis et al., 2021; Muskat & Deery, 2017; Godovykh et al., 2022)

Virtual Event Experiences



- Virtual events offer accessibility but may lack immersive social experiences
- Different event formats are appropriate depending on your goals
- Impacts vary across event types
- “Technical difficulties”

(Wreford et al., 2019; Yung et al., 2022; Godovykh et al., 2022)

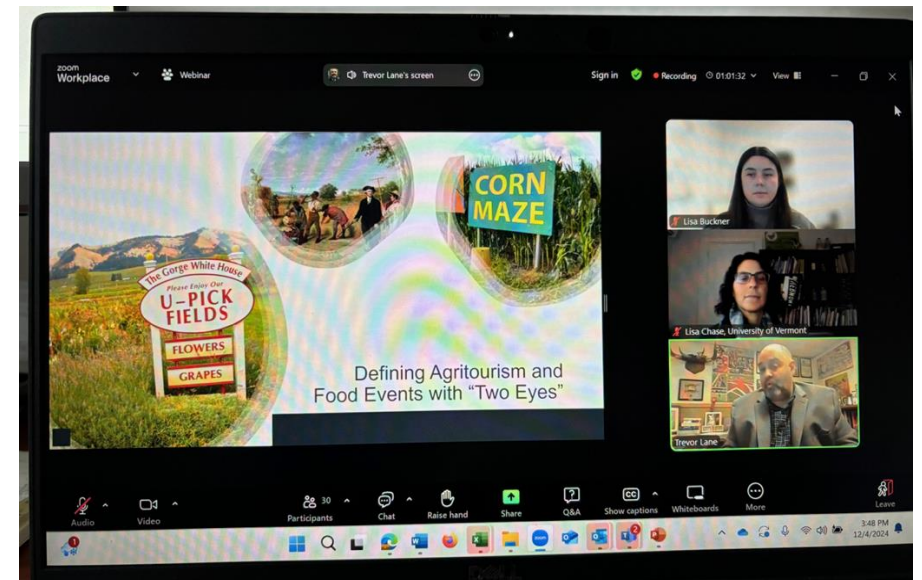


Photo of National Farmers Union Webinar on Agritourism

Enhancing virtual attendee engagement



- Digital tools improve interaction and feedback
- Data insights boost attendee satisfaction



(Ramely et al., 2021; Cornell et al., 2022)

Photo by Bear Cieri, courtesy of Hello Burlington.

Question:



What tools or strategies have you used to keep attendees engaged during virtual events?

Tell us in chat!

Inclusivity and Accessibility



- Virtual events reduce geographic and financial barriers
- Inclusive design fosters broader participation

(Wilson et al., 2014; Levitis et al., 2021)

We still don't know enough

- Limited research on how virtual events can build cross-sector networks in agritourism
- Opportunity to understand interdisciplinary, cross-sector benefits of events

(Skiles et al., 2020)



Photo by Bear Cieri, courtesy of Hello Burlington.

Question:



What is the greatest need in agritourism that can be addressed with events?

Tell us what you think in chat!

In summary..



- Virtual and hybrid events are key tools for agritourism growth and knowledge sharing.
- Effective planning leverages inclusivity, engagement, and ROI insights into events
- But, we still need to know more!

(Alroy et al., 2022)

Our Events & Surveys



Events

- Virtual Gatherings: Summer 2020 – Spring 2022
- International Workshop on Agritourism (hybrid): September 2022

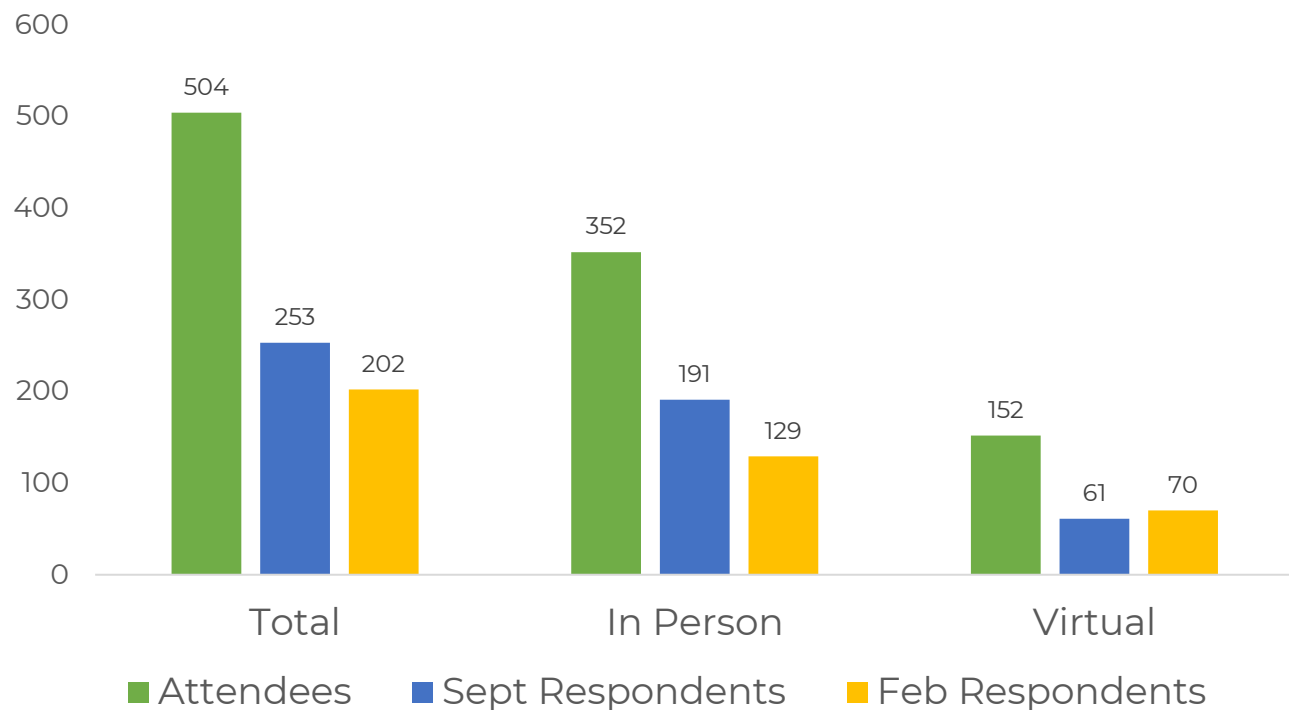
Surveys

- September 2022 Post-Conference Survey
 - IWA registration list (n = 504)
 - 253 Respondents (50% response rate)
- February 2023 follow up survey
 - IWA registration list, Virtual Gatherings registrants, email contact list (n = 2890)
 - 415 respondents (14.4% response rate)



Response Breakout

**Total IWA Attendees Compared to
September 2022 Survey Respondents
and Feb 2023 Survey Respondents who
Attended IWA**



**Events Attended by
February 2023 Survey
Respondents**

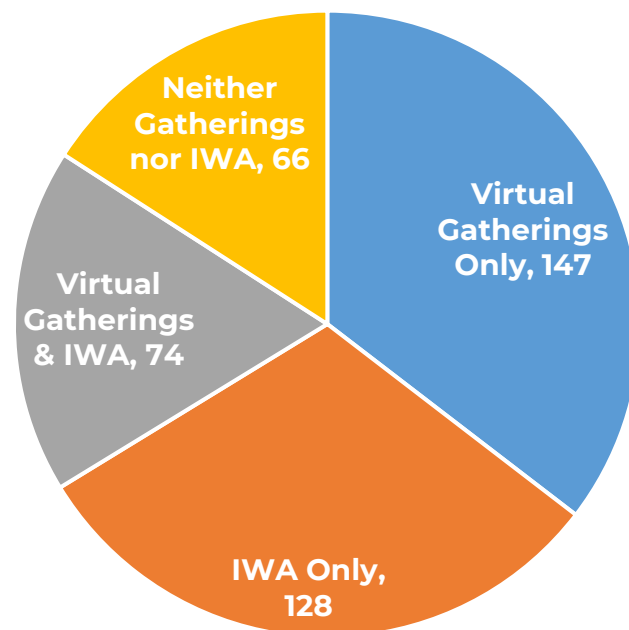




Photo by Bear Cieri, courtesy of Hello Burlington.

Anticipated & Actual Results of the IWA and Virtual Gatherings

Binary Logistic Regression Results



Anticipated & Actual Results of Attending Programs: Researchers, Extension, Nonprofit, Government, Educator



September Survey Demographics (n = 154)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
In-Person	0.75	0	1
Researcher	0.43	0	1
Extension/Service	0.31	0	1
Nonprofit	0.25	0	1
Government	0.10	0	1
Educator	0.32	0	1
USA	0.62	0	1
Male	0.28	0	1
Postgrad degree	0.70	0	1
Age	46.30	21	74

February Survey Demographics (n = 214)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
In-Person at IWA	0.38	0	1
Researcher	0.38	0	1
Extension/Service	0.21	0	1
Nonprofit	0.22	0	1
Government	0.12	0	1
Educator	0.36	0	1
USA	0.51	0	1
Male	0.28	0	1
Postgrad degree	0.70	0	1
Age	50.64	25	83

Anticipated & Actual Results of Attending Programs: Researchers, Extension, Nonprofit, Government, Educator



September Survey Anticipated Results (n = 154)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
Develop publications	0.41	0	1
Develop grant proposal(s)	0.38	0	1
Receive funding	0.19	0	1
Create resources or tools to support agritourism	0.70	0	1
Develop new project collaboration(s)	0.77	0	1
Implement educational workshops or events	0.55	0	1
Find new job opportunities	0.22	0	1

February Survey Accomplished and Partially Accomplished Results (n = 214)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
Developed publications	0.34	0	1
Developed grant proposal(s)	0.19	0	1
Received funding	0.12	0	1
Created resources or tools to support agritourism	0.48	0	1
Developed new project collaboration(s)	0.42	0	1
Implemented educational workshops or events	0.35	0	1
Found new job opportunities	0.12	0	1

September Survey (n = 154)

$$\text{Result} = \beta_0 + \delta_1 \text{inperson} + \delta_2 \text{researcher} + \delta_3 \text{extserv} + \delta_4 \text{nonprofit} + \delta_5 \text{gov} + \delta_6 \text{educator} + \delta_7 \text{USA} + \delta_8 \text{Male} + \delta_9 \text{Postgrad} + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \varepsilon$$



*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Variable	Publications	Grants	Funding	Tools	New Collabs	Ed Events	New Jobs
Intercept	-0.032	-0.349	-2.926**	1.624	2.617**	0.858	0.966
In-Person	0.057	-0.452	0.080	0.101	-0.768	-0.225	0.426
Researcher	1.1236**	0.308	0.278	-0.092	-0.219	-0.121	1.254*
Extension/Service	0.056	0.932*	0.634	0.982	1.1345*	1.411**	0.235
Nonprofit	-0.438	0.300	0.861	0.263	0.688	0.470	-0.739
Government	-2.151	-0.908	-15.498	1.577	0.437	0.436	-0.380
Educator	-0.090	0.512	0.787	0.122	-0.158	0.308	-0.417
USA	-1.178*	0.639	-0.206	0.045	-0.276	0.001	-0.282
Male	-0.581	0.817	0.707	0.096	-0.636	0.187	0.258
Postgrad degree	0.750	-0.129	-0.166	-0.086	0.759	0.125	-0.745
Age	0.009	-0.022	0.014	-0.028	-0.030	-0.027*	-0.053**
McFadden's Pseudo R ²	0.194***	0.088	0.111	0.060	0.099	0.068	0.161**

February Survey (n = 214)

$$\text{Result} = \beta_0 + \delta_1 \text{inperson} + \delta_2 \text{researcher} + \delta_3 \text{extserv} + \delta_4 \text{nonprofit} + \delta_5 \text{gov} + \delta_6 \text{educator} + \delta_7 \text{USA} + \delta_8 \text{Male} + \delta_9 \text{Postgrad} + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \varepsilon$$

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Variable	Publications	Grants	Funding	Tools	New Collabs	Ed Events	New Jobs
Intercept	-1.850*	-1.850*	-2.762**	-0.281	-1.193	-1.112	-1.268
In-Person	0.104	0.251	0.072	0.712*	1.142***	0.003	-0.357
Researcher	1.608***	-0.020	0.447	0.039	0.277	0.232	0.480
Extension/Service	-0.079	-0.352	0.298	-0.076	0.398	0.603	0.262
Nonprofit	0.367	0.124	0.701	-0.123	0.317	0.105	0.320
Government	-0.501	-0.259	0.028	0.231	-0.344	0.584	-0.231
Educator	0.333	-0.064	0.052	0.369	0.700*	0.480	-0.377
USA	-0.186	0.295	0.835	-0.358	0.354	0.430	0.617
Male	0.487	0.076	1.137*	-0.069	0.424	0.054	1.257*
Postgrad degree	-0.341	0.769	0.172	-0.301	0.028	0.102	-0.523
Age	0.009	-0.007	-0.013	0.004	-0.008	-0.006	-0.025
McFadden's Pseudo R ²	0.132***	0.023	0.048	0.026	0.100**	0.028	0.073

Anticipated & Actual Results of Attending Programs: Producers, Tourism Pros, Business Owners/Managers



September Survey Demographics (n = 115)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
In-Person	0.77	0	1
Producer	0.50	0	1
Business Owner/Mgr	0.34	0	1
Tourism Professional	0.39	0	1
USA	0.65	0	1
Male	0.30	0	1
Postgrad degree	0.45	0	1
Age	48.37	21	73

February Survey Demographics (n = 178)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
In-Person at IWA	0.39	0	1
Producer	0.56	0	1
Business Owner/Mgr	0.41	0	1
Tourism Professional	0.35	0	1
USA	0.58	0	1
Male	0.29	0	1
Postgrad degree	0.49	0	1
Age	51.78	26	83

Anticipated & Actual Results of Attending Programs: Producers, Tourism Pros, Business Owners/Managers

September Survey Anticipated Results (n = 115)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
Begin a new agritourism enterprise	0.32	0	1
Improve an existing agritourism enterprise	0.45	0	1
Implement safety and liability protocols	0.27	0	1
Develop or improve a marketing strategy	0.60	0	1
Develop new business partnership(s)	0.57	0	1
Attract new customers/visitors	0.47	0	1
Increase sales	0.34	0	1
Increase profitability	0.34	0	1

February Survey Accomplished and Partially Accomplished Results (n = 178)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
Began a new agritourism enterprise	0.24	0	1
Improved an existing agritourism enterprise	0.43	0	1
Implemented safety and liability protocols	0.27	0	1
Developed or improved a marketing strategy	0.42	0	1
Developed new business partnership(s)	0.33	0	1
Attracted new customers/visitors	0.37	0	1
Increased sales	0.29	0	1
Increased profitability	0.25	0	1

September Survey (n = 115)

$$\text{Result} = \beta_0 + \delta_1 \text{inperson} + \delta_2 \text{producer} + \delta_3 \text{tourism} + \delta_4 \text{biz} + \delta_5 \text{USA} + \delta_6 \text{Male} + \delta_7 \text{Postgrad} + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \varepsilon$$

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Variable	New	Improved	Safety	Marketing	Partnerships	Customers	Sales	Profitability
Intercept	-0.844	-0.182	-0.960	1.090	1.672	0.043	-0.483	-0.305
In-Person	-1.066*	0.583	-0.429	-0.381	0.263	-0.149	-0.410	-1.113*
Producer	0.836	1.342**	1.493**	0.311	-0.210	1.032*	1.369**	1.799***
Tourism Professional	0.329	-0.077	0.076	-0.123	0.601	0.643	0.402	0.745
Business Owner/Manager	-0.420	0.528	0.142	0.006	0.829	0.315	0.425	0.505
USA	0.331	-0.067	0.317	0.372	-0.465	-0.034	0.942	0.669
Male	0.623	-0.471	-0.035	-0.119	-0.578	-0.131	-0.168	-0.382
Postgrad degree	0.602	-0.296	0.231	-0.147	0.502	-0.015	0.125	-0.071
Age	-0.005	-0.021	-0.020	-0.013	-0.035*	-0.018	-0.033	-0.027
McFadden's Pseudo R ²	0.083	0.116*	0.094	0.019	0.092	0.048	0.114*	0.145**

February Survey (n = 178)

$$\text{Result} = \beta_0 + \delta_1 \text{inperson} + \delta_2 \text{producer} + \delta_3 \text{tourism} + \delta_4 \text{biz} + \delta_5 \text{USA} + \delta_6 \text{Male} + \delta_7 \text{Postgrad} + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \varepsilon$$

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

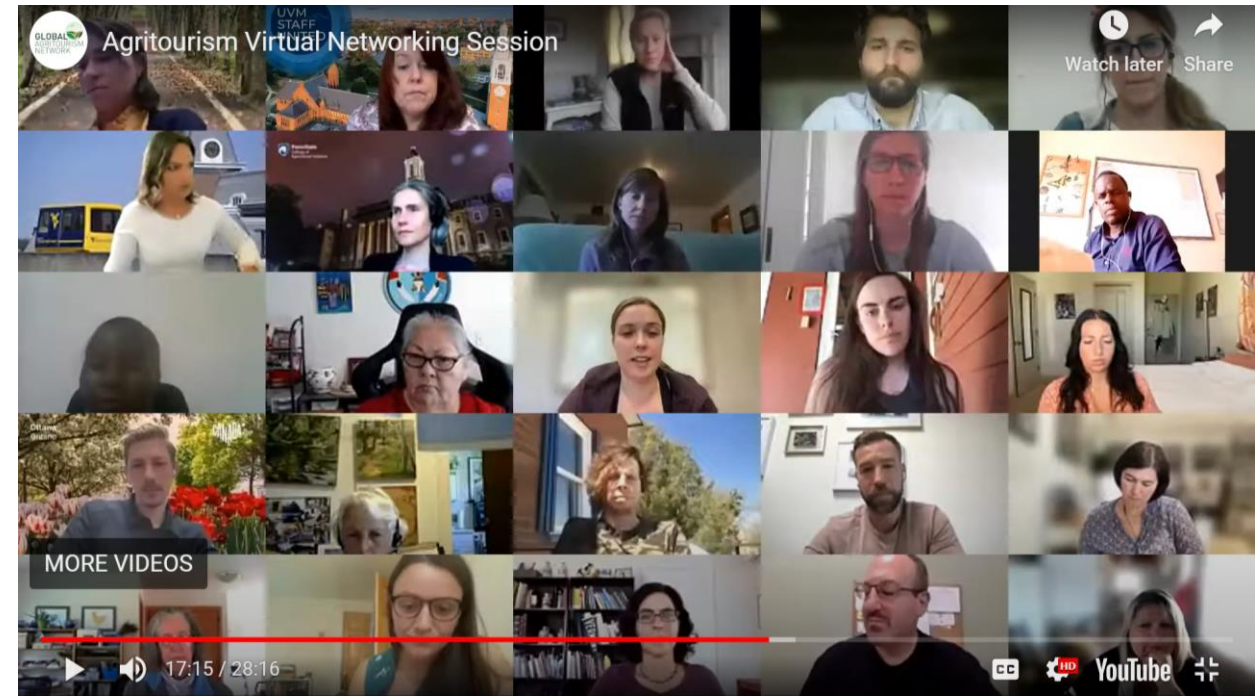
Variable	New	Improved	Safety	Marketing	Partnerships	Customers	Sales	Profitability
Intercept	-0.969	-1.907*	-1.016	-0.749	-1.497	-1.775*	-2.317**	-1.088
In-Person	-0.063	0.275	0.115	0.229	0.490	0.527	0.265	-0.136
Producer	0.447	0.774*	0.764	-0.073	0.245	0.501	0.673	0.892*
Tourism Professional	0.177	0.536	-0.161	0.755*	0.960*	0.262	0.257	0.058
Business Owner/Manager	0.108	0.411	-0.221	0.929**	0.354	0.492	0.466	0.290
USA	0.238	-0.022	0.473	0.763*	-0.128	0.136	-0.135	-0.267
Male	0.339	0.102	0.240	0.475	0.392	0.450	0.697	0.714
Postgrad degree	0.109	-0.161	0.138	-0.591	-0.174	-0.361	-0.521	-0.206
Age	-0.016	0.015	-0.015	-0.012	0.000	0.007	0.015	-0.013
McFadden's Pseudo R ²	0.015	0.040	0.044	0.082*	0.045	0.044	0.057	0.059



Photo by Bear Cieri, courtesy of Hello Burlington.

Benefits of the IWA and Virtual Gatherings

Binary Logistic Regression Results



“Significant” Benefits of Attending Programs

September Survey Demographics
(n = 217)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
In-Person	0.77	0	1
Researcher	0.31	0	1
Extension/Service	0.22	0	1
Nonprofit	0.18	0	1
Government	0.07	0	1
Educator	0.23	0	1
Producer	0.27	0	1
Tourism Professional	0.22	0	1
Business Owner/Mgr	0.20	0	1
USA	0.65	0	1
Male	0.29	0	1
Postgrad degree	0.60	0	1
Age	47.09	21	74

February Survey Demographics
(n = 305)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
In-Person	0.39	0	1
Researcher	0.27	0	1
Extension/Service	0.14	0	1
Nonprofit	0.16	0	1
Government	0.09	0	1
Educator	0.25	0	1
Producer	0.33	0	1
Tourism Professional	0.21	0	1
Business Owner/Mgr	0.24	0	1
USA	0.53	0	1
Male	0.28	0	1
Postgrad degree	0.59	0	1
Age	50.45	25	83

“Significant” Benefits of Attending Programs

September Survey Reported Benefits (n = 217)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
Made new contacts for collaborations "Significantly"	0.62	0	1
Increased my knowledge and understanding of topics "Significantly"	0.74	0	1
Learned about resources related to my work "Significantly"	0.69	0	1
Met my professional development needs "Significantly"	0.57	0	1
Found a sense of community "Significantly"	0.63	0	1

February Survey Reported Benefits (n = 305)

Variable	Mean	Min.	Max.
Made new contacts for collaborations "Significantly"	0.41	0	1
Increased my knowledge and understanding of topics "Significantly"	0.70	0	1
Learned about resources related to my work "Significantly"	0.57	0	1
Met my professional development needs "Significantly"	0.46	0	1
Found a sense of community "Significantly"	0.52	0	1

September Survey (n = 217)

Benefit = $\beta_0 + \delta_1 \text{inperson} +$
 $\delta_2 \text{researcher} + \delta_3 \text{extserv} + \delta_4 \text{nonprofit}$
 $+ \delta_5 \text{gov} + \delta_6 \text{educator} + \delta_7 \text{producer} +$
 $\delta_8 \text{tourism} + \delta_9 \text{biz} + \delta_{10} \text{USA} + \delta_{11} \text{Male} +$
 $\delta_{12} \text{Postgrad} + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \varepsilon$



Photo by Bear Cieri, courtesy of Hello Burlington.

Variable	Contacts	Knowledge	Resources	PD	Community
Intercept	-2.447**	1.493	1.034	-0.237	-0.485
In-Person	2.043***	-0.277	-0.421	0.741*	1.276**
Researcher	1.198*	0.421	0.312	0.549	1.085*
Extension/Service	-0.308	-0.223	-0.059	0.928*	0.008
Nonprofit	0.282	-0.539	-0.419	-0.462	-0.160
Government	0.146	-0.662	0.814	0.114	-0.087
Educator	0.194	-0.281	-0.430	0.479	0.486
Producer	-0.078	-0.823*	-0.183	-0.162	-0.278
Tourism Professional	0.715	-0.031	-0.006	0.406	0.406
Business Owner/Manager	0.420	0.367	0.003	-0.213	0.816
USA	0.779*	-0.105	0.799*	0.324	-0.465
Male	0.921*	0.141	0.701	-0.130	0.250
Postgrad degree	0.190	-0.337	0.172	-0.197	-0.625
Age	-0.001	0.008	-0.013	-0.010	0.003
McFadden's Pseudo R ²	0.159***	0.045	0.053	0.075	0.091*

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

February Survey (n = 305)

Benefit = $\beta_0 + \delta_1 \text{inperson} +$
 $\delta_2 \text{researcher} + \delta_3 \text{extserv} + \delta_4 \text{nonprofit}$
 $+ \delta_5 \text{gov} + \delta_6 \text{educator} + \delta_7 \text{producer} +$
 $\delta_8 \text{tourism} + \delta_9 \text{biz} + \delta_{10} \text{USA} + \delta_{11} \text{Male} +$
 $\delta_{12} \text{Postgrad} + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \varepsilon$



Photo courtesy of Green Mountain Girls Farm

Variable	Contacts	Knowledge	Resources	PD	Community
Intercept	-0.880	0.818	0.165	-0.630	-0.740
In-Person	2.036***	0.363	0.487	1.366***	1.147***
Researcher	0.147	1.003*	0.295	0.292	0.090
Extension/Service	0.007	0.416	0.241	0.652	-0.317
Nonprofit	0.146	-0.011	-0.005	0.326	0.195
Government	-1.094	-0.206	0.237	-0.565	-0.318
Educator	0.182	-0.061	0.381	0.831*	-0.056
Producer	-0.167	-0.121	0.126	-0.408	-0.125
Tourism Professional	0.354	0.007	0.398	0.553	0.703*
Business Owner/Manager	-0.359	-0.193	0.163	0.538	-0.065
USA	-0.342	-0.662*	-0.310	-0.471	-0.282
Male	0.970**	-0.076	0.487	0.419	0.468
Postgrad degree	-0.608	0.141	0.107	-0.058	-0.273
Age	-0.002	0.001	-0.010	-0.009	0.010
McFadden's Pseudo R ²	0.191***	0.069*	0.042	0.137***	0.075**

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Respondent Perspectives: Networking



“The in-person networking was excellent. As a new entrant into the field, I probably increased my professional network by 500%...I believe attending the conference in-person greatly contributed to these [networking] benefits, I do not think I would have made many connections as a virtual attendee.” – September Respondent, IWA In-Person Attendee

“The conference helped me solidify professional relationships that I already had, which will be very helpful in forging future collaborations. Great to finally meet so many people in person!” – February Respondent, IWA In-Person Attendee

“I attended virtually and while I found a lot of the presentations worthwhile, I would have really like being there in person.” – September Respondent, IWA Virtual Attendee



Photo by Bear Cieri, courtesy of Hello Burlington.

Respondent Perspectives: Accessibility



"It was made possible for me by having the virtual format. It was great!" – September Respondent, IWA virtual attendee

"It gave me an opportunity to attend the workshop, when I could not attend in-person due to Visa challenges." – September Respondent, IWA virtual attendee

"It allowed me to "be present" on the days that I couldn't (I was sick)" – September Respondent, IWA in-person attendee

"Very much appreciated that all sessions can be accessed later (I don't have to choose!) and the accessibility to virtual participants" – September Respondent, IWA in-person attendee



Photo by Bear Cieri, courtesy of Hello Burlington.

Photo by Bear Cieri, courtesy of Hello Burlington.



Takeaways

- Virtual Gatherings allowed this network to grow and diversify across the globe, setting the stage for GAN.
- Virtual attendance at webinars and the IWA were equally effective for spreading knowledge and access to resources.
- In-person events remain important for building relationships (and for conducting agritourism itself!)
- While in-person events do have additional benefits, offering a hybrid option makes the event more accessible.

Question:



Do these takeaways resonate with your experience hosting or attending events?

Tell us in chat!

Upcoming Webinars



January 14, 2025

The Role of NGOs in Agritourism Development:
Examples from Eastern Europe

February 4, 2025

Policy, Advocacy, and Strategy for Supporting
Agritourism

More information on webinars:



Mark your calendars!

NETtra 2025

Tourism Conference

October 7-10, 2025



in the historic resort town of
Meredith, NH on the shores of
Lake Winnepesaukee



**NATIONAL EXTENSION
TOURISM NETWORK**



TTRA

Advancing Travel Insights Globally

Northeast U.S. Chapter (NETTRA)



Extension

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