

GrowinG Internship Program

GrowinG Wyoming's
agricultural workforce

The GrowinG Internship Program facilitates hands-on internships for beginning farmers and ranchers, providing them with work experience on Wyoming operations. Through education, mentoring, and technical assistance, the program offers beginning farmers and ranchers the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations and enhance sustainability.



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING

College of Agriculture, Life Sciences
and Natural Resources
Agricultural and
Applied Economics



Sometimes the most impactful lessons are learned **outside the classroom**. When it comes to starting a career in agriculture, there's no substitute for real-world experience.

The GrowinG Internship Program connects aspiring farmers and ranchers with experienced mentors. By design, **every internship is unique**.

Interns must be **at least 18 years old** and express interest in getting involved in agriculture or have **less than 10 years of experience running their own agricultural enterprise**. Many GrowinG interns are college students, recent graduates, or individuals pursuing a career change. Some have an agricultural background, while others are new to the field.

To maximize success, GrowinG program coordinators carefully analyze anonymous host and intern profiles before assigning pairs. Coordinators also provide orientation and ongoing support via Zoom and online learning modules. Hosts provide room and board throughout the 10-week internship period.


In addition to working alongside their hosts, interns are required to submit weekly work summaries and attend at least one educational event, such as a UW Extension program or industry conference. Interns who successfully fulfill internship requirements receive a \$5,000 stipend.

Interns and hosts report that the program facilitates **stronger connections to rural communities and local food systems**. Not only do interns develop technical skills, like how to repair machinery, irrigate crops, and care for livestock, but they also learn about bookkeeping, marketing, and risk management.

GrowinG interns aren't just extra help. They're the **future of Wyoming agriculture**, providing opportunities for hosts to **mentor the next generation**.

Learn more at growing-wy.org.



A close-up, low-angle shot of a horse's head, focusing on its eye and muzzle. The horse has dark brown fur and a white blaze on its muzzle. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field.

"This has been the best 10 weeks of my life, and anyone would benefit from this experience. Even if you have been living on your own operations, it's a great opportunity to learn new things from new people. This internship has been extremely beneficial and I hope to see the future of this program prosper."

—2024 GrowinG intern

38 unique internships awarded in 4 years
SOME HOSTS AND INTERNS PARTICIPATED IN MULTIPLE YEARS

Interns came from **15** states, including Wyoming
7 INTERNS IDENTIFIED AS VETERANS

100% of interns reported substantial growth in at least 2 technical skills (e.g., irrigation, machinery, livestock care)

95% reported increased confidence in their ability to pursue an agricultural career

More than **80%** cited improved understanding of business and risk management

14 interns received academic credit through participation
10 FROM UW, 4 FROM OUT-OF-STATE INSTITUTIONS

25 unique host operations

12 Wyoming counties

BUILD PRACTICAL SKILLS

- **Livestock care:** Feeding, health checks, moving animals, assisting with branding and calving
- **Crop production:** Planting, irrigating, weeding, harvesting, post-harvest processing
- **Business management:** Observing or helping with bookkeeping, record keeping, or ordering supplies
- **Marketing and outreach:** Preparing for or working at farmers' markets, engaging with customers, helping with CSA shares

“Each day was different, but every task built on the last. By the end of my internship, I felt confident working with both livestock and crops, and I understood how each decision on the ranch affects the whole operation.”

—2023 GrowinG intern

“Students learn the academic side of agriculture at UW, but [our intern] learned the practical, hands-on side of agriculture on our ranch.”

—2023 GrowinG host





LEARN FROM SUPPORTIVE, EXPERIENCED MENTORS

- Whether it's tending livestock, irrigating fields, or learning about bookkeeping, GrowinG interns participate in daily farm and ranch activities alongside their hosts. Internships provide an opportunity to share local, generational knowledge.
- Hosts provide individualized mentorship, tailoring their teaching to the intern's experience level. Interns often complete individual projects that expand their skill set and also benefit the host operation.
- Host operations ranged from multigenerational cow-calf ranches to diversified, value-added enterprises that incorporated on-farm finishing, cut-flower production, agritourism, or ag-tech consulting.

“It is a great program, and we wish there were more like it. Ranchers and farmers don’t always get this type of opportunity to share their knowledge with the younger generations. The wealth of knowledge that can be learned from an internship like this is invaluable.”

—2024 GrowinG host

NETWORK WITH INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

- GrowinG internships facilitate formal and informal networking with local and regional ag professionals.
- Interns are required to attend an educational event, like a UW Extension program or Wyoming Stock Growers Association convention. Many report that these events provide key networking opportunities.

“I have met so many wonderful people and made new connections that have helped me decide what I want to do next in my future.”

—2023 GrowinG intern

“I actively put myself into conversations and spoke to as many people as I could [at the educational event].”

—2023 GrowinG intern





EXPLORE POTENTIAL CAREER PATHS

- The GrowinG program creates opportunities for interns of all experience levels to explore potential careers in ag.
- Pre-internship surveys showed that less than half of interns planned to pursue a career in Wyoming agriculture. Most cited “uncertainty” or “lack of experience” as barriers.
- After completing the internship, more than two-thirds of interns indicated increased interest in returning to work in Wyoming agriculture or operating their own farm or ranch.

“Before this internship, I wasn’t sure if agriculture was for me. Now I know I want to build my own operation someday.”

—2022 GrowinG intern

OFFER NEW PERSPECTIVES TO ESTABLISHED PRODUCERS

- Multiple hosts have participated for two or more years, citing the value of “fresh perspectives” and “giving back.”
- 75% of hosts changed at least one management practice after discussions with interns.

“Our intern brought new ideas, asked thoughtful questions, and helped us see our operation differently. We now look forward to mentoring each season.”

—Multi-year GrowinG host

“The best part is watching someone realize they can do hard things—and that agriculture needs new voices.”

—2022 GrowinG host



From Intern to Farm Manager

Making Connections on Fremont County Cut-flower Farms

Emzie Coop, a UW student majoring in plant production and protection, dreamed of one day opening a cut-flower operation. But, aside from participating in her local FFA chapter in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, she didn't have a background in agriculture.

When she heard about the GrowinG Internship Program through a UW faculty member, Coop jumped at the opportunity to gain real-world experience. In 2024, she interned at Mae Orchard Blooms, a peony farm in Crowheart. Thanks to networking opportunities facilitated by her host, she secured a farm manager position on another Fremont County cut-flower operation the following summer.

During her 10 weeks at Mae Orchard Blooms, Coop learned firsthand what it took to grow, harvest, and process locally grown flowers, then transform them into elegant floral displays. "The internship I had with Brandie [at Mae Orchard Blooms] was really foundational... It was my first time having experience in the field that I was interested in," Coop reflects. "All of those skills transfer[red] to this summer and I've been able to build on them."



Hear from Interns in
the GrowinG program!



Business owner and operator Brandie Mae Orchard serves as farmer, florist, photographer, marketer, and delivery person for Mae Orchard Blooms. As a GrowinG host, she was excited to share her knowledge with an aspiring producer who was eager to learn and contribute to the business.

“Hands-on experience is like gold and sometimes it’s hard to get the opportunity,” she says. “We’re building these beautiful relationships and connections that allow students to hopefully go and do this on their own but know that they have people they can reach out to in the future to help them.”

All GrowinG interns are required to complete an off-site learning experience, so Orchard, fellow Fremont County cut-flower producer Teresa Tibbets, and Coop took a field trip to a Colorado flower farm. Tibbets, proprietor of

Dandelion Farm & Floral, later reached out to Coop to see if she was interested in working as a farm manager during the 2025 season.

“I knew [Emzie] had the motivation because she really wants to be a farmer,” Tibbets comments. “I wanted to be in the position where I could be teaching someone who really wants to learn.”

Coop says working with Tibbets was a great learning experience, building on the skills she’d learned the previous summer and providing new leadership opportunities. In addition to performing tasks like weeding and processing flowers, she also supervised three high school students and helped implement new infrastructure projects, such as installing electric fencing.

Both her GrowinG internship and job at Dandelion Farm & Floral helped solidify

Coop’s interest in pursuing a career in agriculture. “These past two summers, I’ve really enjoyed the work I’ve done, I’m proud of the work I’ve done here, and I would like to just continue that,” she says.

After graduation, Coop plans to find a job in the agricultural industry, then slowly begin building her own enterprise.

As for Orchard and Tibbets, they piloted a joint internship in 2025, with GrowinG intern Courtney Robb spending the first five weeks of her internship at Mae Orchard Blooms and the second half at Dandelion Farm & Floral.

Like Coop, Robb is a rising senior studying plant production and protection at UW. While she’s ultimately hoping to focus on vegetable production, Robb says her internship provided invaluable work experience.

“I would highly recommend this internship,” she comments. “Even if cut flowers aren’t your thing, it really just opens your eyes to see that side of agriculture.”



**Hear from Hosts in the
GrowinG program!**

FUTURE GOALS

Going forward, the GrowinG Internship Program seeks to:

- Establish at least one host site in each of Wyoming's 23 counties.
- Recruit a wider variety of host sites, including specialty crop farms, conservation organizations, and agritourism operations.
- Develop an alumni network to help interns and hosts stay connected, share resources, and support one another.
- Expand educational offerings, potentially launching an apprenticeship program for returning interns and practicum experiences for both new and returning interns.
- Strengthen partnerships with educational institutions, producer groups, tribal communities, and statewide agricultural institutions.



THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

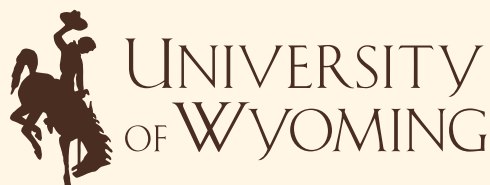
The USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) has provided the majority of funding for the GrowinG Internship Program. Other contributors include the UW Ranch Management and Agricultural Leadership (RMAL) Program, the UW Department of Plant Sciences, and UW Giving Day donors.

In addition to the UW College of Agriculture, Life Sciences and Natural Resources, the following entities have provided support for the GrowinG Internship Program.

- Farm Credit Services of America
- RightRisk
- Wyoming Crop Improvement Association
- Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
- Wyoming Stock Growers Association
- Wyoming Wool Growers Association
- University of Wyoming Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics
- University of Wyoming Extension



National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Issued in furtherance of extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mandy Marney, Director, University of Wyoming Extension, College of Agriculture, Life Sciences and Natural Resources, University of Wyoming Extension, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming 82071.

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