

# Women Land and Legacy Pilot Session Evaluation

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Prepared for the Women, Land, and Legacy State  
Team

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## Women Land and Legacy Pilot Session Evaluation Executive Summary

Two WLL pilot sessions were held with local WLL planning teams during 2013 to facilitate relationship building between WLL participants and their communities. The purpose of the pilots was twofold; the first half focused on strengthening the local team by analyzing the structure and contributions of team members. The second half focused on creating tools to help women identify the value of small women-owned businesses. An evaluation was conducted to determine if the pilot session met its goals.

Nine participants completed paper evaluation surveys before leaving the pilot session. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with six participants (some of whom completed the paper surveys) to uncover how each team implemented what they learned from the pilot session.

Highlights from the survey/and or phone interviews administered after the pilot session commenced show that:

- Respondents agree the pilot session **renewed their understanding of WLL's vision.**
- Respondents also agree (with a score of 4.11 on a scale of 1 to 5) that, **"It is important for my local WLL planning team to support leadership development for women."**
- Despite the small sample size, two survey questions in which survey respondents were asked to rate a question on a scale from 1 to 5 showed a statistically significant HIGHER score in Tama County than in Iowa County. Both statements were related to leadership. They were: "The session helped me make a connection between livelihoods and community leadership," and "It is important for my local WLL planning team to support leadership development for women." The lower scores from the Iowa County can be attributed to concerns one participant had about the use of the term "leadership" in WLL and its influence on that planning team's discussion. In turn, this prompted considerable discussion about use of this term by the WLL State Team.
- The **most significant/interesting discussion** identified by pilot session participants were those addressing **leadership styles** (mentioned by 3 survey respondents and 3 interviewees) and the **mapping activity** each team conducted to spatially identify women owned rural based businesses (mentioned by 1 survey respondent and 3 interviewees).
- **Half of interviewees (3) said they have seen a difference in how their WLL team works together since the pilot session.** The Tama County team has experienced more open and interactive discussion. The Iowa County team has seen non-service provider women take on more leadership responsibilities. However, interviewees from the Iowa County team were unable to link this change directly to the pilot session.
- Several interviewees suggested that information shared in the pilot be added to the WLL handbook or that the training be offered to all new WLL groups. This shows that **pilot session participants found the information shared in the pilot session to be valuable** and wished they had known it earlier.
- Interviewees expressed varying levels of support of WLL's expanded focus on supporting small business owners who are women. **While some embraced application of an expanded focus, others expressed reservations, saying they did not have the time, expertise, or interest to reach out to business owners who are not (directly) tied to agriculture.** It may be important for the WLL State Team to clarify or issue a statement on its vision, mission, and/or goals if women owned businesses, regardless of sector, will be the target for WLL activities in the future.
- **These reservations show that some WLL participants see business outside of the scope of their group. This may be because they do not see agriculture as business** which confirms some of the 2007 findings the WLL State Team found in its analysis of the Listening Sessions (see Women, Land and Legacy: Results from the Listening Sessions, available at

[http://womenlandandlegacy.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/wll\\_listening\\_session\\_results1.pdf](http://womenlandandlegacy.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/wll_listening_session_results1.pdf)).

Those findings show women exhibit a clear and strong consciousness about land health issues and respect nature intrinsically—not for its productive value, but because it sustains all life. This may explain why participants in the pilot sessions are challenged to view farming as a business.

Several women mentioned actions they have taken as a result of the pilot session.

- **Interviewees from both counties said their group has already used information gathered during the mapping activity.** The Iowa County team invited two food-related businesses identified through the mapping activity to participate in a networking event held at Fireside Winery in September 2013. Tama County identified a fish farm through the mapping activity and added a tour of that farm to their 2014 farm visit schedule.
- **Both county teams took action to reach out to non-agricultural women business owners or operators as a result of the pilot session.** Iowa County has decided to include non-agricultural women-owned or -operated businesses in future Fireside Winery networking events. Three Tama County team members met with the Tama County Economic Development director to discuss holding a listening session for small business owners/operators.
- One interviewee shared the information on leadership styles and strengths with someone from Benton County interested in starting a WLL group, because she believed it would help him organize a group with diverse strengths.

Several suggestions for improving future pilot sessions emerged from the evaluation.

- Adjust language used during the “faces of leadership” discussion to validate the flat leadership structure typically used in WLL activities in which everyone shares responsibilities.
- Include information on leadership styles in the WLL Development Guide.
- Suggest teams meet within one or two weeks of the pilot session to discuss implementing what they learned.
- Help local WLL teams see the commonalities between agricultural businesses and other types of businesses more clearly. They may need examples of topics that could be useful in listening sessions that would appeal to both agricultural and non-agricultural business owners, such as business planning or how to market products to target audiences.
- Because the Tama County team rated two questions about leadership at a statistically significant higher level than Iowa County, meeting organizers are encouraged to consider the use of the term “leadership” and decide whether this term is aptly capturing what WLL wants to promote and/or support.

## WLL Pilot Session Evaluation

Two WLL pilot sessions were held with local WLL planning teams during 2013 to facilitate relationship building between WLL participants and their communities. The purpose of the pilots was twofold; the first half focused on strengthening the local team by analyzing the structure and contributions of team members. The second half focused on creating tools to help women identify the value of small women-owned businesses. An evaluation was conducted to determine if the pilot session met its goals.

### Methods

Paper evaluation surveys were completed and collected at the end of both pilot sessions. Nine completed surveys were received, 6 from Tama County and 3 from Iowa County.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with three members from each county group, many of whom were likely to have completed a paper survey. The interviews were held after each local team had had an opportunity to meet and discuss the pilot session. The Iowa County interviews were conducted in November 2013, and the Tama County interviews were conducted in January 2014.

### Respondents

Survey participants and interviewees were asked to identify their occupational affiliations and could select more than one answer. Table 1 summarizes the occupational affiliations of survey respondents and interviewees. As one can see, the most common occupations of all evaluation participants were farm owner (8), farm operator (8), and service providers (6). No business owners were represented in the evaluation.

**Table 1: Survey and interview participant occupational affiliations**

	Survey respondents (n=9)	Interviewees (n=6)
Farm owner/co-owner	5 (56%)	3 (50%)
Non-operator farm owner	2 (22%)	0 (0%)
Farm owner, operator, or partner	3 (33%)	0 (0%)
Farm operator	4 (44%)	4 (67%)
Farm partner	4 (44%)	0 (0%)
Business owners	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Business partner	2 (22%)	0 (0%)
Farm service provider	2 (22%)	4 (67%)

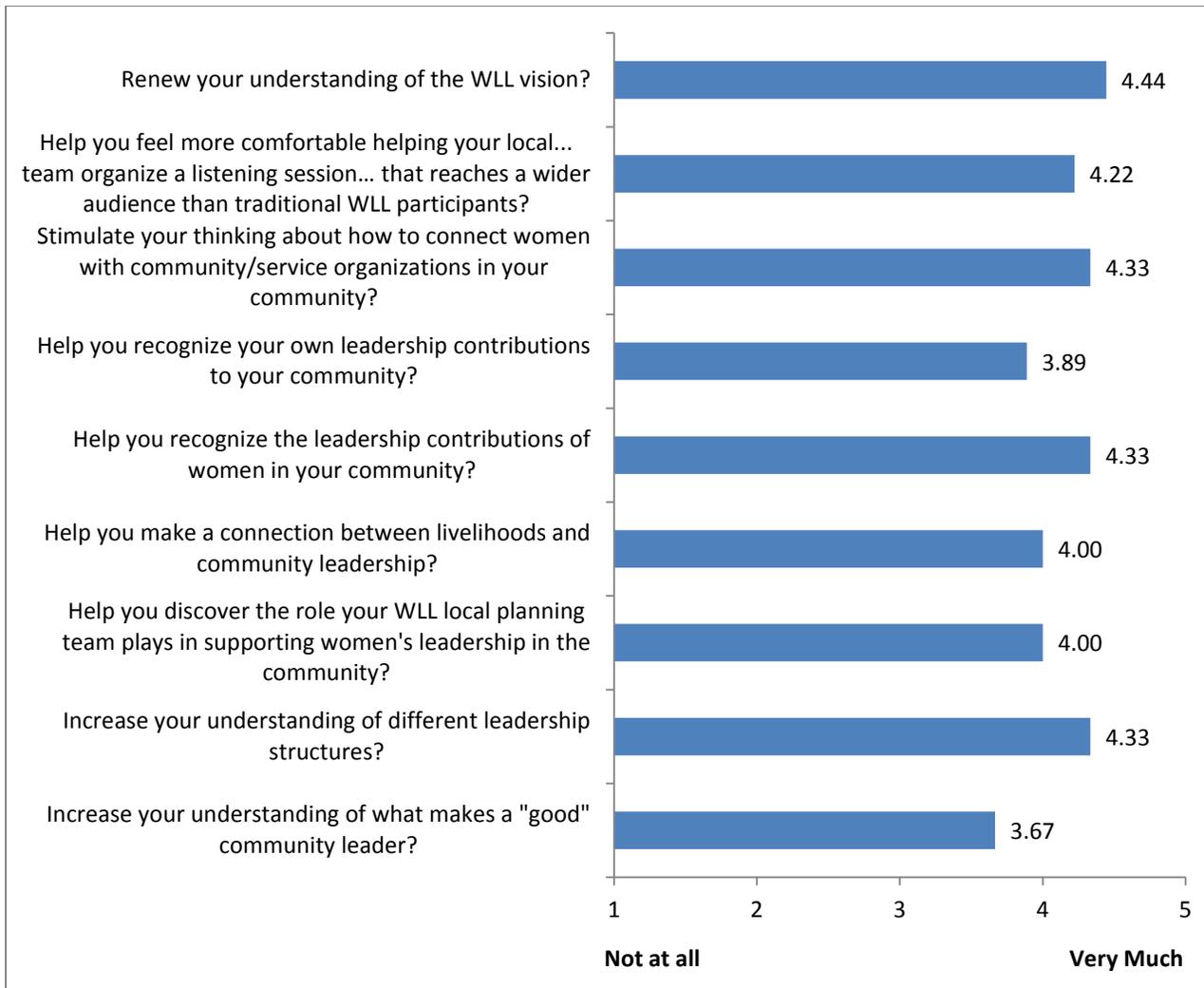
## Results

### Session ratings

Survey participants were asked to rate the extent to which the session led to nine different outcomes on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1= not at all and 5= very much. **All scores were high, ranging from 3.67 to 4.44.** “The pilot session renewed your understanding of the WLL vision” received the highest score (4.44) of all statements. Results are shown in Figure 1.

The average score for each session outcome was compared from each meeting location using a t-test of means. One outcome received a higher score in Tama (average score of 4.33) than in Iowa County (3.33) at a significance level of .05: “The session helped me make a connection between livelihoods and community leadership.” This is likely due to differences in the way Iowa County responded to use of the term “leadership” in the pilot discussions and what constitutes a “leader,” with one participant in particular voicing concerns about the term which influenced that pilot session’s conversation as well as the State Team’s use of the term/concept.

**Figure 1: Rate the extent to which the pilot session accomplished various objectives**

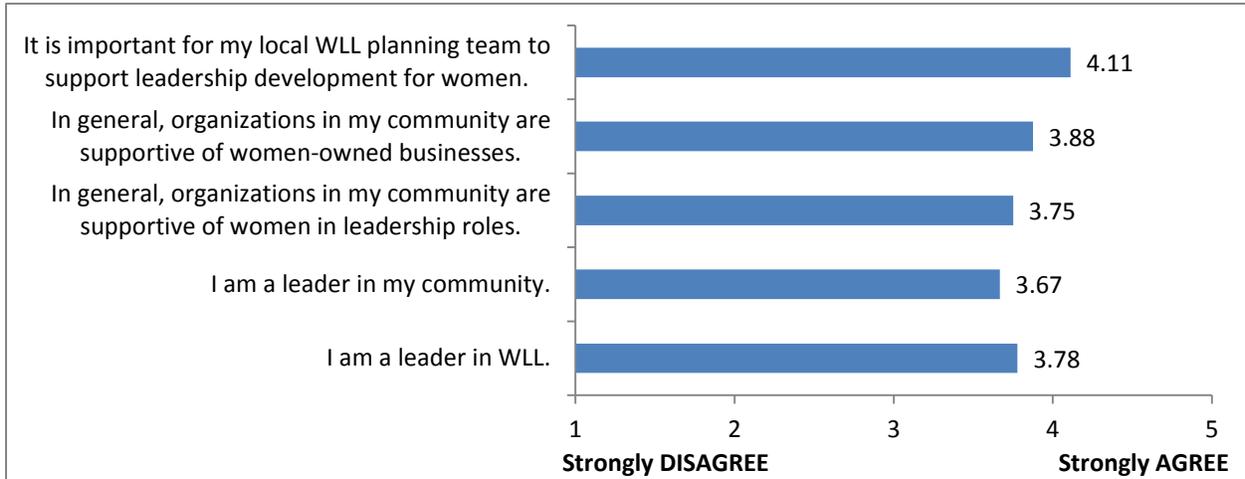


Survey participants were also asked to rate the extent (also on a scale of 1 to 5) to which they agreed with various statements based on the discussion held in the pilot session. Results are shown in Figure 2.

Scores were moderate to high, ranging from 3.67 to 4.11. The statement with which participants most agreed was, “It is important for my local WLL planning team to support leadership development for women.”

Again, one statement had a significantly higher score in Tama than in Iowa County: “It is important for my local WLL planning team to support leadership development for women.” Tama’s average score (4.33) was significantly higher than Iowa County’s (3.67) at a significance level of  $p < .01$ .

**Figure 2: Rate the extent to which you agree with various statements based on the discussion in the pilot session**



### Most interesting or significant aspects of the pilot session

Respondents were asked what information presented at the session they most *wanted to share* with the community. Similarly, interviewees were asked what, if anything, struck them *as interesting or significant* about the pilot session. Results are shown in Table 2. **The most commonly mentioned topics were the leadership styles discussion (mentioned by 3 survey respondents and 3 interviewees) and the mapping activity (1 survey respondent and 3 interviewees).** Interviewees explained that the WLL groups have continued to discuss these two topics and apply information learned.

**Table 2: Topics pilot session participants found worth sharing (survey participants only) or interesting or significant (interviewees only)**

Topic	Survey respondents (n=7)	Interviewees (n=6)
Leadership styles	3 (43%)	3 (50%)
Map activity	1 (14%)	3 (50%)
Defining community	0 (0%)	2 (33%)
WLL’s purpose	0 (0%)	2 (33%)
Community livelihood	2 (28%)	0 (0%)
Economic development with small businesses	2 (28%)	0 (0%)

Because interviewees were given the opportunity to give further explanation, the topics they mentioned--leadership styles, the mapping activity, defining community, and WLL's purpose--are explored in more depth below.

### **Leadership discussion**

Interviewee comments about leadership were mostly positive. **Two mentioned that understanding the different faces of leadership has helped them think more clearly about who they should invite to join their local WLL Team.** The Iowa County team had recently identified people they wanted to join their team at the time of the pilot session. Although they had already invited two women to join at the time, the leadership discussion was timely. One explained, "We need to bring on people with different strengths. We talked about how to recognize strengths and finding what strengths to fill [...] I didn't know how to [recognize people's strengths], but now I'll use it when we recruit new people."

One interviewee found the information on faces of leadership so important, she shared the information with a person from Benton County interested in starting a WLL group. She believed the faces of leadership information would help him organize a group with diverse strengths and that **all beginning WLL groups should be given this information.**

Interviewees also discussed some negative reactions to the leadership discussion. One interviewee explained, "The definition of leadership [used in the session] was a real hang up and road block for me to be fully participating in that pilot session. It closed the window for me [...] I didn't stay open to the discussion." Others shed light onto why the presentation of leadership styles may have caused a negative reaction. Interviewees from both county WLL teams said their team has a flat leadership structure in which everyone shares the responsibility of leadership. "We don't have anybody in charge, but work together on it," said one. One shared that the leadership discussion during the pilot session seems to be talking about a type of leadership that was incongruent with her own team's experience with leadership, "The more we talked about women in the community and leadership roles and what they gravitate to, the word choice [of leadership] made me think of a top-down approach, rather than a circle."

Despite some concerns and decidedly differential interpretations about the leadership discussion, **survey results depicted in Figure 1 show respondents learned useful information from the leadership discussion.** The last six statements refer to outcomes of the leadership discussion, all receiving high scores, ranging from 3.67 to 4.33 on a scale of 1 to 5.

Survey respondents were also asked to rate the extent to which their WLL local team has been able to support leadership development in the past. **On a scale from 0 to 3, WLL local teams' leadership development support was rated at 2.25 (n=8). This indicates that pilot session attendees believed their WLL team was already doing a good job of supporting leadership development.** The fact that WLL teams were already putting effort toward leadership development does not mean the pilot session was unneeded, but that the pilot session offered new information to help them continue to develop women as leaders, perhaps in new ways.

Clearly, interviewees found the leadership discussion important, because it helped them identify strengths on their team and provided additional information to help WLL teams meet their already-held objective of developing women as leaders. However, the language used during this discussion may need to be adjusted to affirm the leadership structure that many WLL groups may have--that of a circle where everyone works together and no one has more or less power than others.

## Mapping activity

The mapping activity was used to identify small businesses throughout the county. It expanded interviewees' understandings of what constitutes a business. Said one interviewee, "We started realizing there are lots of little businesses making money [for people] on the side. People may not consider them businesses, but they are." She gave the example of a person who put out a sign in their yard saying, "Will weld." She did not realize until after participating in the map activity that that person has a small business.

**Interviewees from both counties said their group has already used information gathered during the mapping activity.** Iowa County was already planning a networking event at the Fireside Winery when they had their pilot session. The event included a tour of the winery and featured local food and agriculture businesses. Through the mapping activity they were able to identify women-owned or operated businesses. Two or three of those businesses were invited to participate in the event, and they did.

The Tama County group added a visit to a fish farm to their 2014 farm visit schedule; the farm was identified as a local business through the mapping activity.

## Defining community and WLL's goals

Two interviewees said they have continued to think about the definition of community since the pilot session. The Tama County WLL team returned to this subject in their next WLL planning team meeting and came up with their own definition of community: "Community brings us together to achieve a common goal." Thus, they defined it as a community of interest as opposed to a community of place.

Two also explained they continued to think about WLL's goals after the meeting. While one felt the meeting reinforced their already-held goals, another felt the information shared in the meeting contradicted their local team's goals.

## Outreach to women who own or operate businesses

The pilot session was designed to enable local WLL teams to hold a listening session for small businesses owned or operated by women. Figure 1 shows **participants largely agreed that the pilot session helped them feel more comfortable helping their local WLL planning team organize a listening session on the role of women leaders in the community that would reach a wider audience than traditional WLL participants.** In addition, according to interviewees, both the Iowa and Tama County teams continued to discuss this idea following their pilot sessions.

**Iowa County plans to reach out to women business owners/operators by inviting them to participate in future Fireside Winery events, which they are planning to make an annual event.** In the future, the WLL team hopes to expand the types of businesses they feature to include non-ag related businesses, such as people making unique goods or crafts. (They do not plan to invite vendors selling nationally-available products, such as Scentsy products or Thirty-one bags.) They will also invite women business owners/operators to join in other WLL programming, but are not planning to tailor programming to them. Iowa County interviewees did not foresee holding a listening session for women business owners/operators. "We didn't discuss creating a listening session specifically. I think that might be down the road a ways for Iowa County," said one interviewee.

Following the pilot session, **three women from Tama County talked with their county economic director about holding a listening session for small business owners/operators, especially female owners/operators.** Following that initial meeting, the Tama County planning team agreed they'd like to

work with the local economic director and his staff to coordinate a listening session. (Because economic development [ED] cannot discriminate between male and female business owners, the listening session will be for both men and women.) However, once that session is held, interviewees do not foresee continued WLL involvement in ED activities, because they do not feel the WLL local planning team has the time or the expertise to reach out to non-agricultural businesses. As one interviewee explained, “We don’t have business backgrounds, so it’s a better fit for economic development, because they have more expertise.” Another shared, “We still want to see an ag connection [...] because we are Women Land and Legacy we wanted to keep it more tied to the land.”

### Changes in how WLL teams work together

**Half of the interviewees have seen changes in how their WLL team works together since the session,** although they are not all sure that the changes came as a result of the pilot session.

One Tama County interviewee believed the team came to know one another better during the pilot session. As a result, **they have been more open in their discussions together** since. She explained, “Maybe because it was an all-day meeting we had some activities that broke the reserve a little.”

Two interviewees from Iowa County have recently noticed a change in who takes the initiative to plan their meetings. Since the start of their WLL team about two years ago, women working for farm service agencies have taken the lead more so than other women. Lately, however, the women working for farm service agencies have had extra responsibilities at work and home, limiting the time they could devote to WLL. One interviewee explained that their team didn’t hold a meeting in October 2013, because neither of the agency-employed women had sent out an e-mail to arrange the meeting. Since then, **non-service agency women have taken on more leadership responsibilities.** “In November a non-agency person sent an e-mail asking to set up a meeting. [The agency employees] didn’t say, ‘Let’s let them step up.’ It just happened.” During the November meeting, the non-agency women did most of the planning for 2014 and divided up the responsibilities for those meetings among themselves.

### WLL’s impact on participants’ work

Interviewees were asked how participating in WLL has impacted their own work, whether that be at a farm service agency, a farm, or elsewhere. Participation has impacted them in a variety of ways, including the following:

#### Farm impacts:

- One farmer incorporated what she learned in a WLL session about marketing.
- One farmer pursued help from Extension to implement a new grazing system on her farm, including cover crops, as a result of a WLL listening session.
- One farmer said information from WLL listening sessions has spurred conversation with her husband and sons, with whom she farms.

#### Farm service agency impacts:

- Farm service providers are often asked to do something or give information on a topic that doesn’t fall within the agency’s scope of work. However, WLL gives service providers another platform through which they may be able to address those requests. One service provider shared an example of this, “Some women come in and say things like, ‘My dad passed away and Mom and I are trying to understand our options [for the farm].’ They are looking for direction

and resources. I say, 'You should consider looking into [WLL]. If anything, you'll find women who have gone through your scenario [who] you can relate to and talk to.'"

- Increased understanding of women farmers. One interviewee said, "Even though I'm a woman it has opened my eyes to some of the things [...] [women farmers] deal with and some of their struggles. It has made me more knowledgeable and understanding of women farmers."
- One learned through participation in WLL that personal connections are important when working with women. She realized that while at work she was fighting her tendency to connect with female clients on a personal level and was "making an intentional effort to just be all about business." As a result of participating in WLL, "I [now] understand that [personal connections] are a part of having a business connection with women customers; I'm open to work with women in a way that comes more naturally."
- One service provider believes she has seen an increase in the number of women coming to their office since they began participating in WLL. "Since our name is affiliated as a sponsor of WLL more women are coming to us [...]"

### Interviewee Suggestions

Interviewees gave suggestions regarding future pilot sessions.

One suggested the information about leadership strengths and how to select a team with diverse strengths should be included in the WLL Development Guide for new WLL teams to use when they are forming their teams.

Similarly, another believed the information about defining community and on how women work together should be offered through a training session for newly formed WLL groups.

Finally, one suggested that groups participating in future pilot sessions be encouraged to meet within a few weeks of the session to continue conversations begun during the pilot session. This will keep momentum going and allow groups to take action while the information is fresh in their minds.

**These suggestions all indicate that pilot session participants found the information shared in the pilot session to be valuable, and believed all WLL groups should have access to the information.**

### Discussion

The WLL pilot session had three main goals:

- A. Strengthening and enhancing the success of WLL Local Teams.
- B. Share tools and strategies with local teams to find new members that fit the way the team wants to work.
- C. Share tools and strategies with local WLL teams to help them connect the work of the local team with well-being and livelihood in their communities.

The following discussion will point out evidence of whether or not these goals were met through the pilot session.

### Enhancing the success of local WLL teams

Some evidence points out how the pilot session enhanced local WLL teams' success. They include:

- One Tama County interviewee believed the team came to know one another better during the pilot session. As a result, they have been more open in their discussions together since. She

explained, “Maybe because it was an all-day meeting we had some activities that broke the reserve a little.”

- Both teams have used information collected during the mapping exercise. One team invited businesses to participate in their Fireside Winery event and the other is planning a WLL visit to a local fish farm.

### **Share tools and strategies with local teams to find new members that fit the way the team wants to work.**

As discussed earlier, reactions to the discussion on the faces of a leader were mostly positive. Survey results showed that WLL teams were already working to develop women as leaders, indicating this was already a goal held by local teams. In addition, ratings of the session’s leadership activities were high. We suggest, however, that the language used during this session be adjusted to affirm the leadership structure already held by most WLL teams--that of a circle where responsibilities are shared.

### **Connect the work of the local team with well-being and livelihood in their communities.**

Reaching out to women in non-agricultural or non-food businesses is new for WLL, which in the past has primarily focused efforts on serving women who farm, own agricultural land, or provide services to agriculture in some way.

Interviewees expressed varying levels of acceptance of this expanded focus. A few were enthusiastic about reaching out to non-farm businesses. For example, one interviewee from Iowa County said, “We plan to have the type of event we had in September and make it an annual event. We’ll expand to include [other types of women-owned businesses...]. We were already starting to head down that road. [The pilot session] was very timely and it helped the others, especially, to see that [reaching out to other types of businesses] is a good fit and is important.” Another shared that her team continued to discuss including small rural businesses as part of WLL. “We still need to work on identifying more of those businesses; that addition to WLL everyone agreed would be positive.”

However, some interviewees expressed hesitation about reaching out to women business owners and operators. Several mentioned they are willing to reach out only if the businesses are tied to agriculture in some way. For example, one shared their mission was to empower local women in agriculture. She explained that their outreach to businesses “isn’t just to businesses, they still have to have an agricultural link.”

Another expected reaching out to women businesses owners might cause people to be confused about WLL’s mission or audience. One said, “I don’t know how [the rest of my team] feels about actually doing another listening session for [non-agricultural] businesses[...] I think the concern is that there may be confusion in the county, because it’s a different audience.”

As mentioned earlier, others expressed that they did not have the time, expertise, or interest to begin serving non-agriculture related businesses. “Part of the meeting about engaging local women business owners didn’t jive with our local group’s vision. Trying to branch what we’re doing into the business arena didn’t generate much interest with our group.”

**These reservations show that some WLL participants see business outside of the scope of their group. This may be because they do not see agriculture as business** which confirms some of the 2007 findings the WLL State Team found in its analysis of the Listening Sessions (see Women, Land and Legacy: Results from the Listening Sessions, available at [http://womenlandandlegacy.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/wll\\_listening\\_session\\_results1.pdf](http://womenlandandlegacy.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/wll_listening_session_results1.pdf)). Those

findings show women exhibit a clear and strong consciousness about land health issues and respect nature intrinsically—not for its productive value, but because it sustains all life. This may explain why participants in the pilot sessions are challenged to view farming as a business.

Neither county that participated in the WLL pilot session seem ready or willing to dive deeply into educating women business owners at this time. Tama County interviewees expressed they want women business owners to have access to educational opportunities and are willing to initiate a process with women business owners by having a listening session where women business owners identify their educational needs. However, they want to defer the responsibility for educating women business owners on to the county economic development office as beyond their local planning team’s focus.

Iowa County is open to networking with women who own businesses, agricultural or otherwise, and want to include them in the next Fireside Winery event. However, they didn’t express that they were ready at this time to hold a listening session for women who own or operate businesses or that they were planning to tailor their educational events to business owners.

Based on these reactions, **we suggest that future pilot session help local WLL teams see the commonalities between agricultural businesses and other types of businesses more clearly.** They may need to give specific examples of topics that could be explored in listening sessions that would appeal to both agricultural and non-agricultural business owners, such as business planning or how to market products to target audiences.

## Suggestions

Several suggestions for improving future pilot sessions emerged from the evaluation.

- Adjust language used during the faces of leadership discussion to validate the leadership structure WLL teams tend to operate through--a flat leadership structure in which everyone shares responsibilities. Consider supplanting the term “leadership” with a different term that better reflects with the way in which the local planning teams do their work.
- Include information on leadership styles and definitions of community in the WLL handbook, regardless of the terms used.
- Ask teams to meet again within one or two weeks of the pilot session to discuss implementing what they learned.
- Help local WLL teams see the commonalities between agricultural businesses and other types of businesses more clearly. They may need to give specific examples of topics that could be explored in listening sessions that would appeal to both agricultural and non-agricultural business owners, such as business planning or how to market products to target audiences.