



# North Dakota Trusted Advisor Partnership

March 2023

# SFL Introduction

**SFL works to create a sustainable food system by helping organizations turn ideas into action**

**The cornerstones of our approach are:**

- Harnessing a long-view and embracing the complexity of the whole system to foster unlikely partnerships
- Creating a “kitchen table” culture where stakeholders can roll up their sleeves, speak candidly and learn from each other’s perspectives
- Designing and managing supply chain initiatives and collaborations among food companies, NGO’s, farmer organizations and research institutions

## Our Team



**Elizabeth Reaves**



**Kelly Rincon**



**Ben Harris**

# Program Context

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Over the past decade or more, there have been a number of programs targeting farmers to try and convince them to adopt more soil health building practices. However, the effectiveness and reach of these programs has been limited, with most farmers choosing to continue in their current practices rather than implement change.

Early adopter farmers are more likely to make practice changes, but the majority of row-crop farmers have not yet been convinced. The North Dakota Trusted Advisor program aims to bring more mainstream farmers into regenerative agriculture.



# Addressing the challenge of scaling regenerative agriculture

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## Three Levers to Scale

Companies have piloted many strategies to engage with farmers and shift to a regenerative approach in agriculture. However, these practices haven't reached much beyond the early-adopter growers, limiting scale and impact. This project addresses three key levers to encourage adoption of regenerative practices at scale.



### Trusted Advisors

Accelerate the scale and pace of change by working with advisors that growers already know and trust to spread soil health building practices



### Financial Incentives

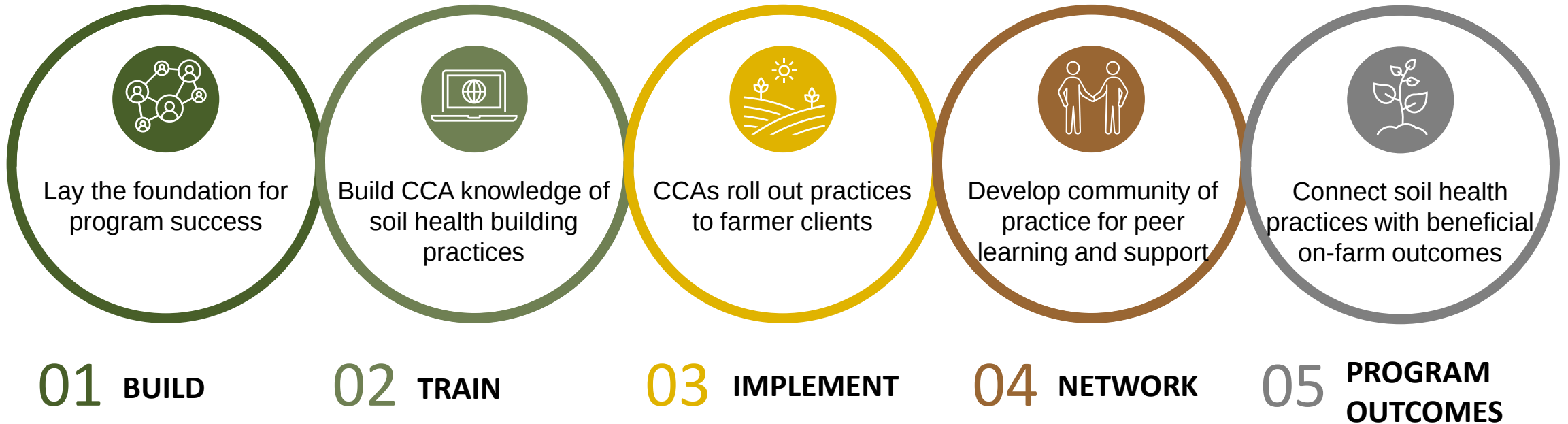
Test a suite of financial incentives to determine which mechanisms work best in which situations and collect grower feedback



### Whole Farm

Instead of a single crop focus, take a whole-farm approach with companies representing each part of the rotation to better engage with farmers

# Program Design



# Program Design



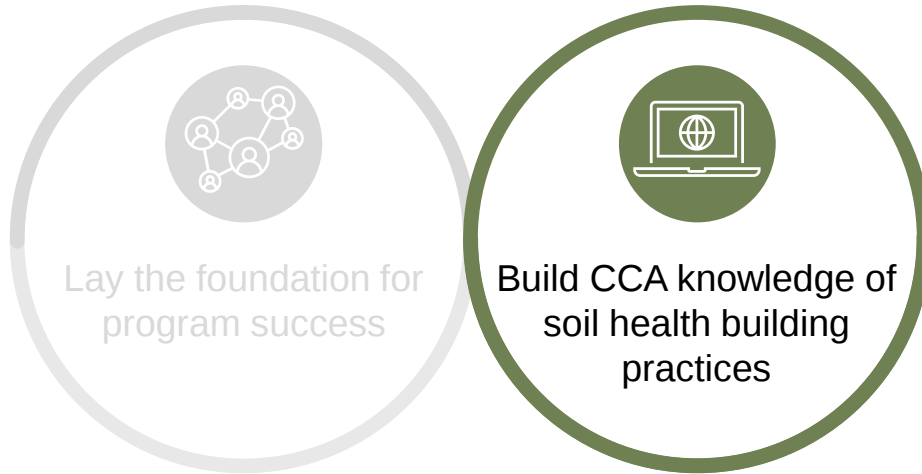
## 01 BUILD

- Create a network of organizations to pool resources and carry out a region-wide soil health program
- Source funding to kick off the program

# North Dakota TAP Project Partners



# Program Design



01 BUILD

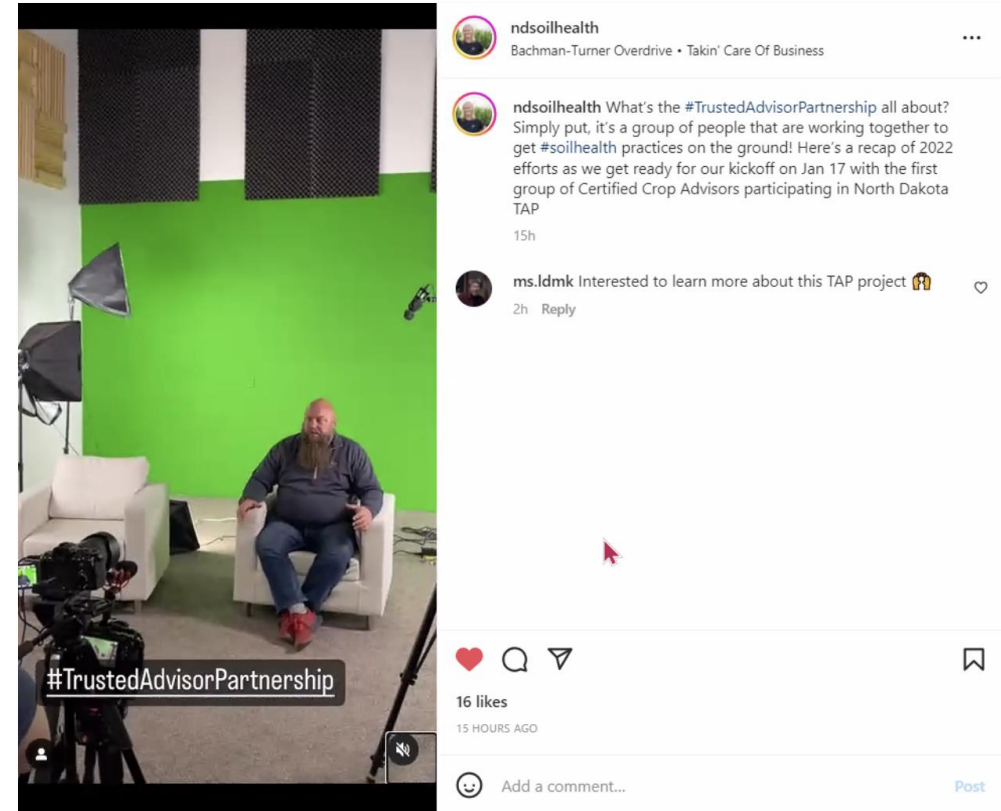
02 TRAIN

- Develop training materials (videos, podcasts, etc) for North Dakota CCAs
- Enroll CCAs into the training program and build their knowledge of soil health building practices

# TAP Curriculum Design

We're building this training to be:

- **Applicable** – The focus is on instilling a mentality of problem-solving and systems thinking for agronomists in order to make logistics work for farmers, adding another tool to farmers' tool belts
- **Intuitive** – TAP is designed the way CCAs think: The process drives the curriculum, not the other way around
  - Information gathering, determining farmer readiness, goal-setting, evaluating practice effectiveness, and more
- **Extensible** – we will add new content to the modules on an ongoing basis to ensure the latest science is reflected in how CCAs are trained



# TAP Cohort 1 has enrolled 15 participants



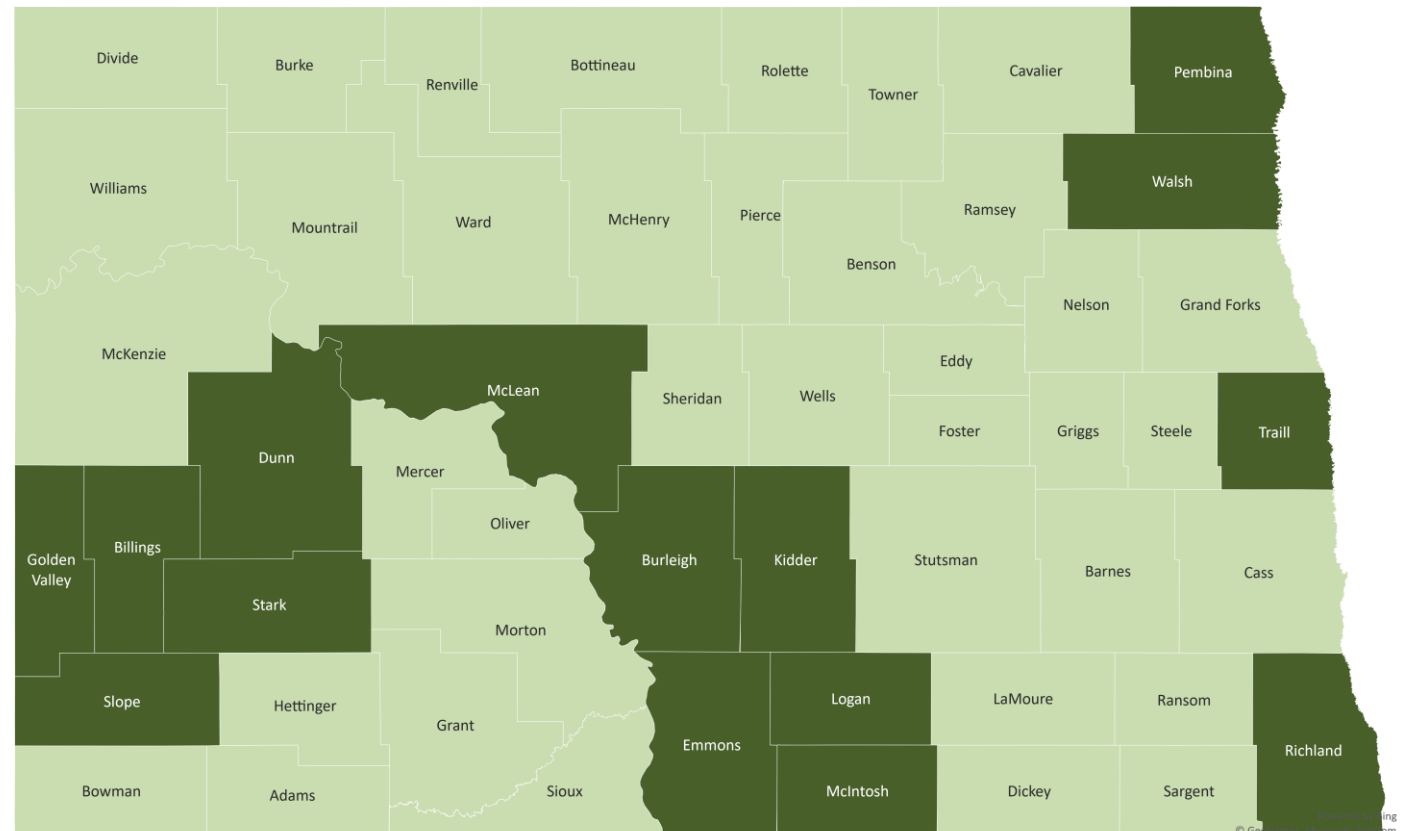
## Cohort 1 (N=5)

Total  
365,000

Max 165,000

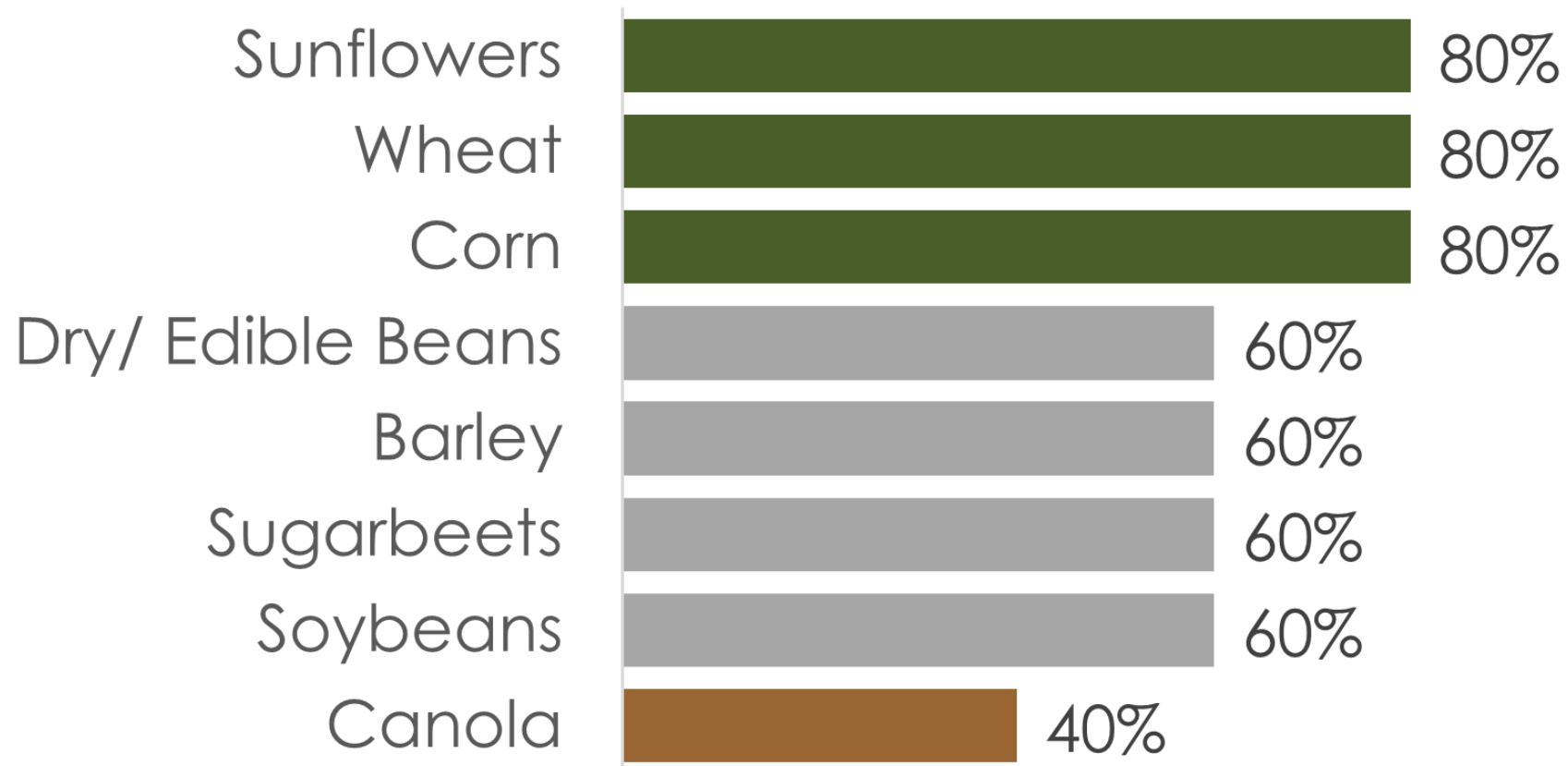
Median 60,000

- TAP surveyed 5 out of the 15 CCAs, and they represent 365k acres consulted on across 15 counties

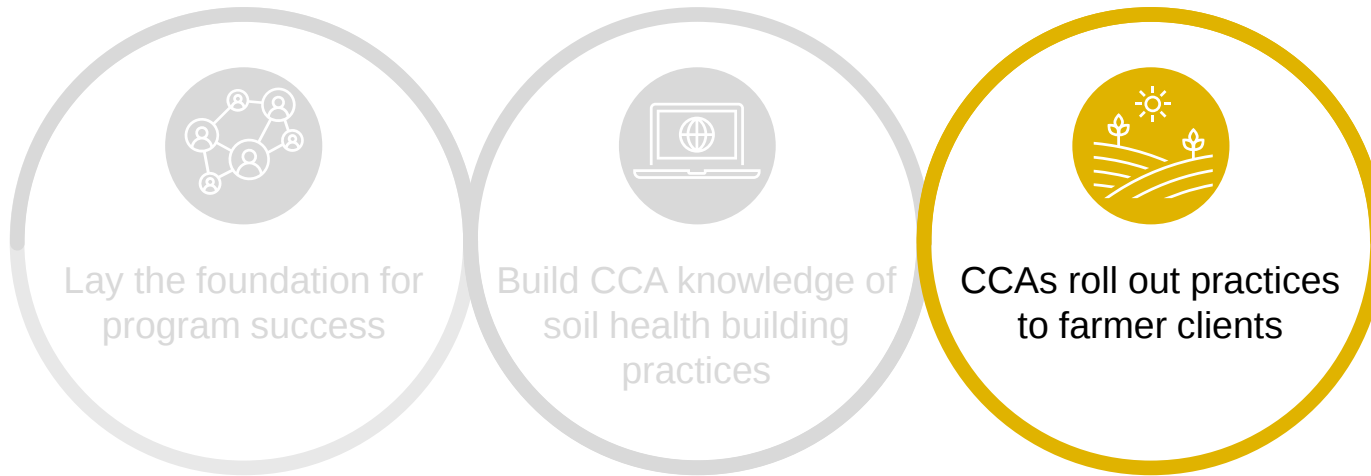


# Multiple crops represented in TAP Cohort 1

N = 5 respondents



# Program Design



01 BUILD

02 TRAIN

03 IMPLEMENT

- Participating CCAs guide their farmer clients in adoption of soil health practices
- Connect farmers to financial support to carry out practice change

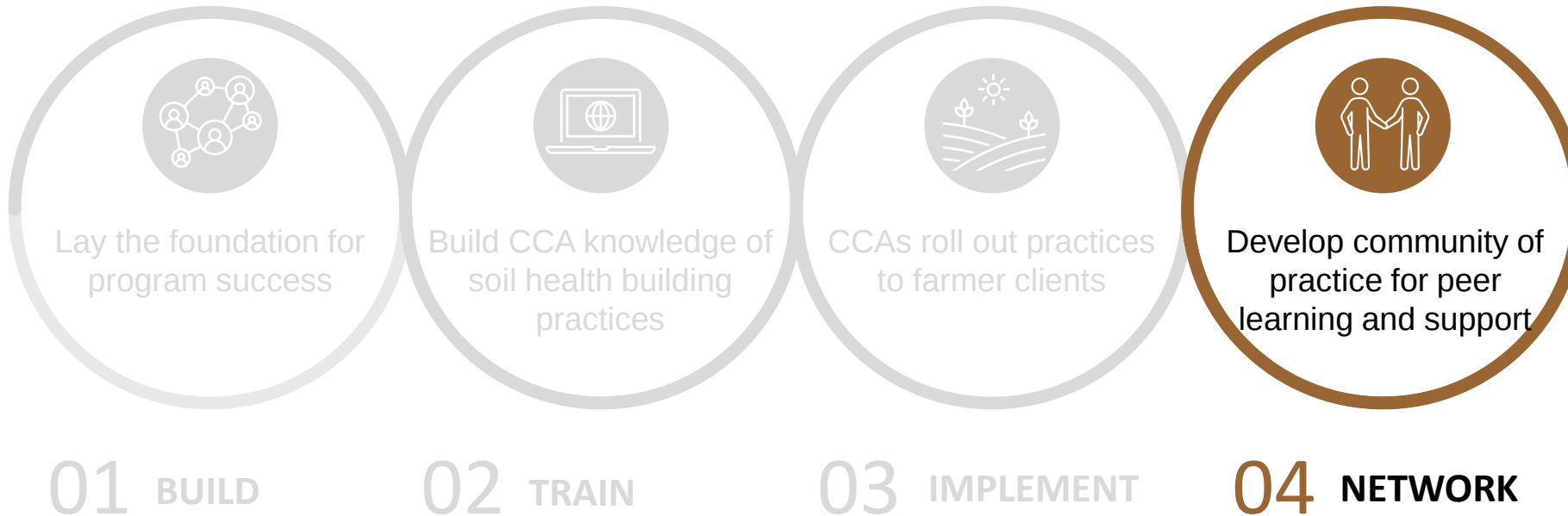
# CCAs will select farmers to participate in the program

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The program will defer to individual CCA judgment when it comes to choosing which farms are enrolled. However, we believe that, by and large, CCAs will tend to base their selections on:

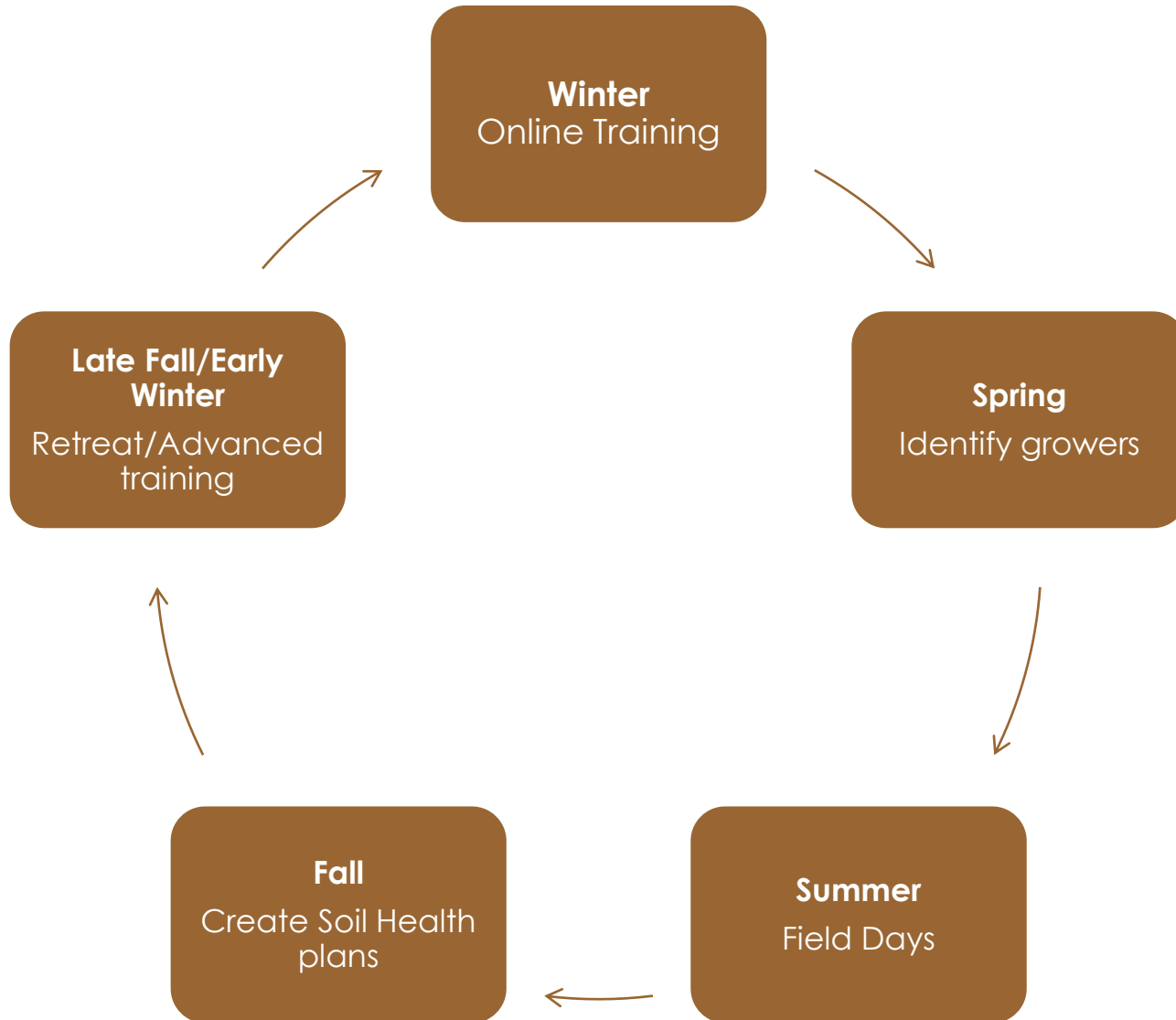
- 1 **Mindset:** Farmer interest and willingness to stick with soil health practices;
- 2 **Risk:** Farms with a risk profile that would benefit from new practices;
- 3 **Logistics:** Farmers that are part of a supply chain/commodity system that is of particular interest to project stakeholders

# Program Design

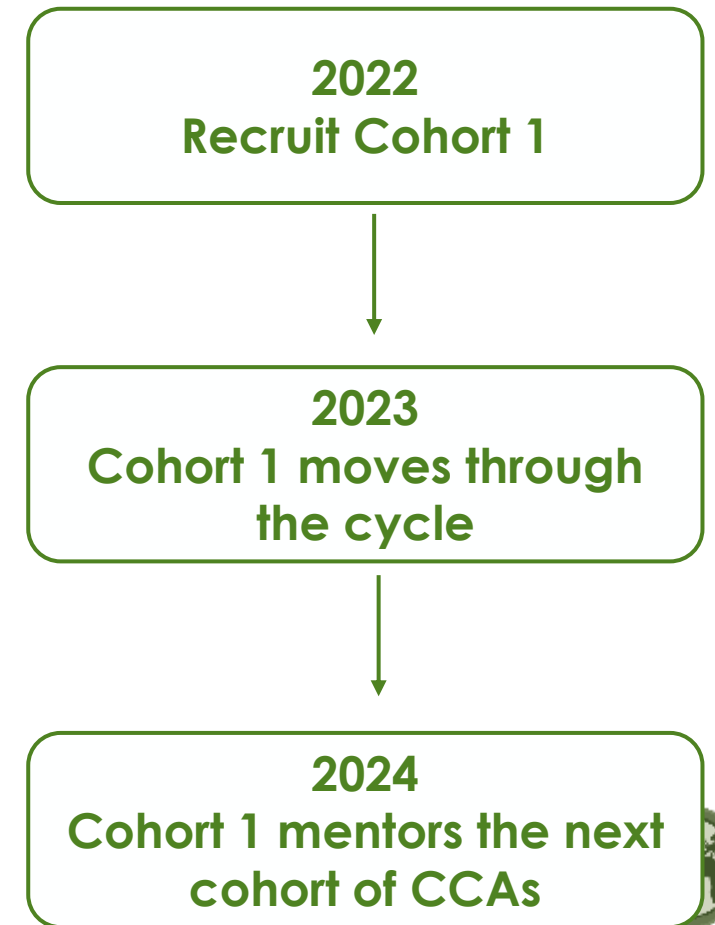


- Create a formal CCA network to provide community, information sharing, and mentorship
- Gather feedback on needs of farmers and CCAs using focus groups and surveys

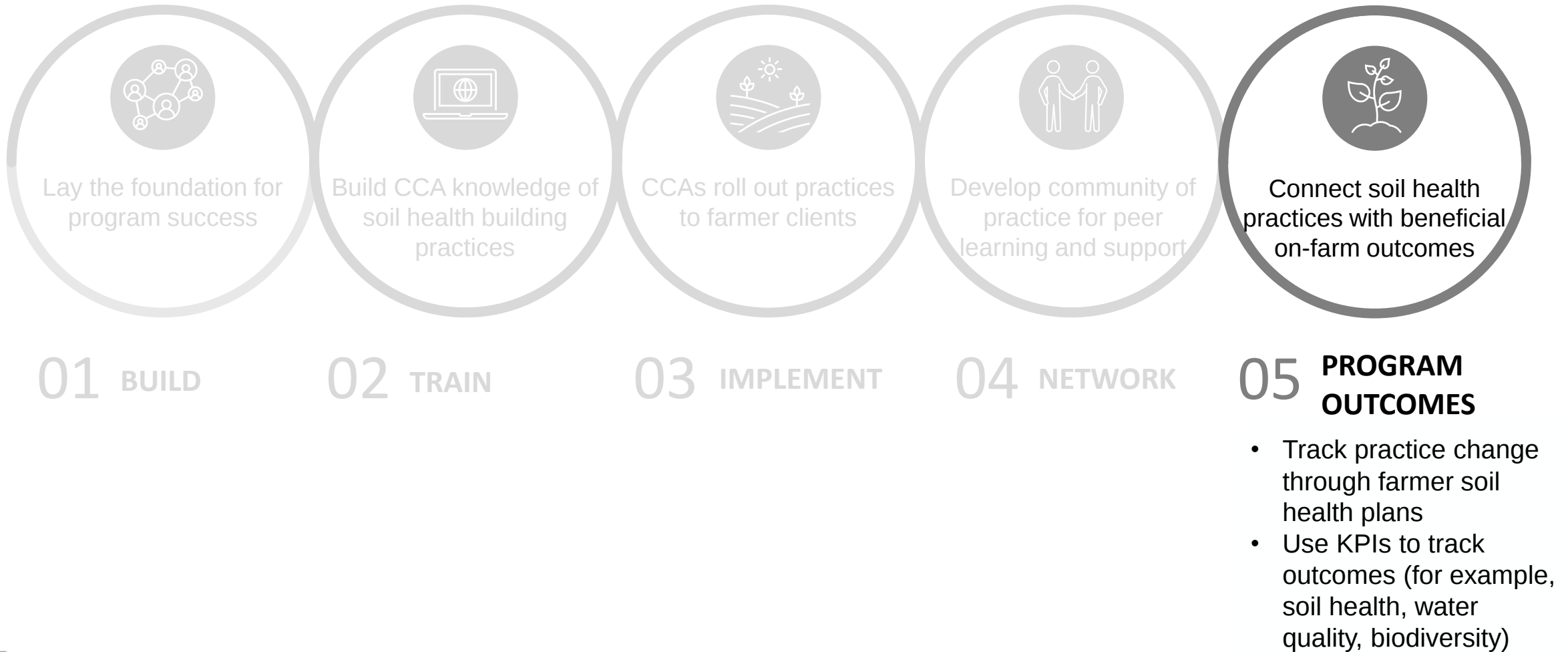
# CCA training cycle helps build network



## CCA Engagement Progression



# Program Design



# Key program objectives by the end of 2025

1. Enroll 60 independent CCAs into the program and have them complete the full suite of trainings, engage with their farmer clients on soil health building practices, and attend group soil health building workshops
2. Reach 300,000 acres across approximately 136 farmers, which represents roughly 17% of the 60 CCAs' farmer clients
3. Foster relationships with tribes in the region to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes from investments made in the TAP program

# Incorporating perspectives on regenerative outcomes

- Our company partners think about regenerative agriculture as a set of practices and principles that improve soil health, water, biodiversity, climate, and livelihoods
- ND CCAs and farmers see regenerative agriculture as a path to improving soil health while holding their soil in place and protecting from erosion
- In conversations with Bob Shimek at White Earth Nation and Jasmine Courville (via Rachel Ricciardi at EPA and Gary Bahr at WA Dept of Ag), regenerative agriculture is important because it can lead to improved water quality and the protection of keystone species through the reduction of chemical inputs



**SUSTAINABLE FOOD LAB**