

June 10, 2026

**Ohio Agriculture Education
Summer Conference**



FORK FARMS™
FOOD ACCESS TECHNOLOGY

Foundations of Hydroponics



Your Experience Today

You will have a hands-on experience and learn how to implement the Foundations of Hydroponics credential.

This session will “train the trainer.”

Assemble a Flex Farm; practice care, maintenance, planting and harvesting; go through the structure, curriculum, assessment, and reporting.

Hear actionable tips on building enriching programs that create ownership and pride, and how to produce at scale.

Q&A throughout!

Walk away with lettuce and the tools, experience, and strategies needed to cultivate a thriving hydroponics credential program!

Meet your Ohio Fork Farms Team!



Anne Rogerson
VP of Education
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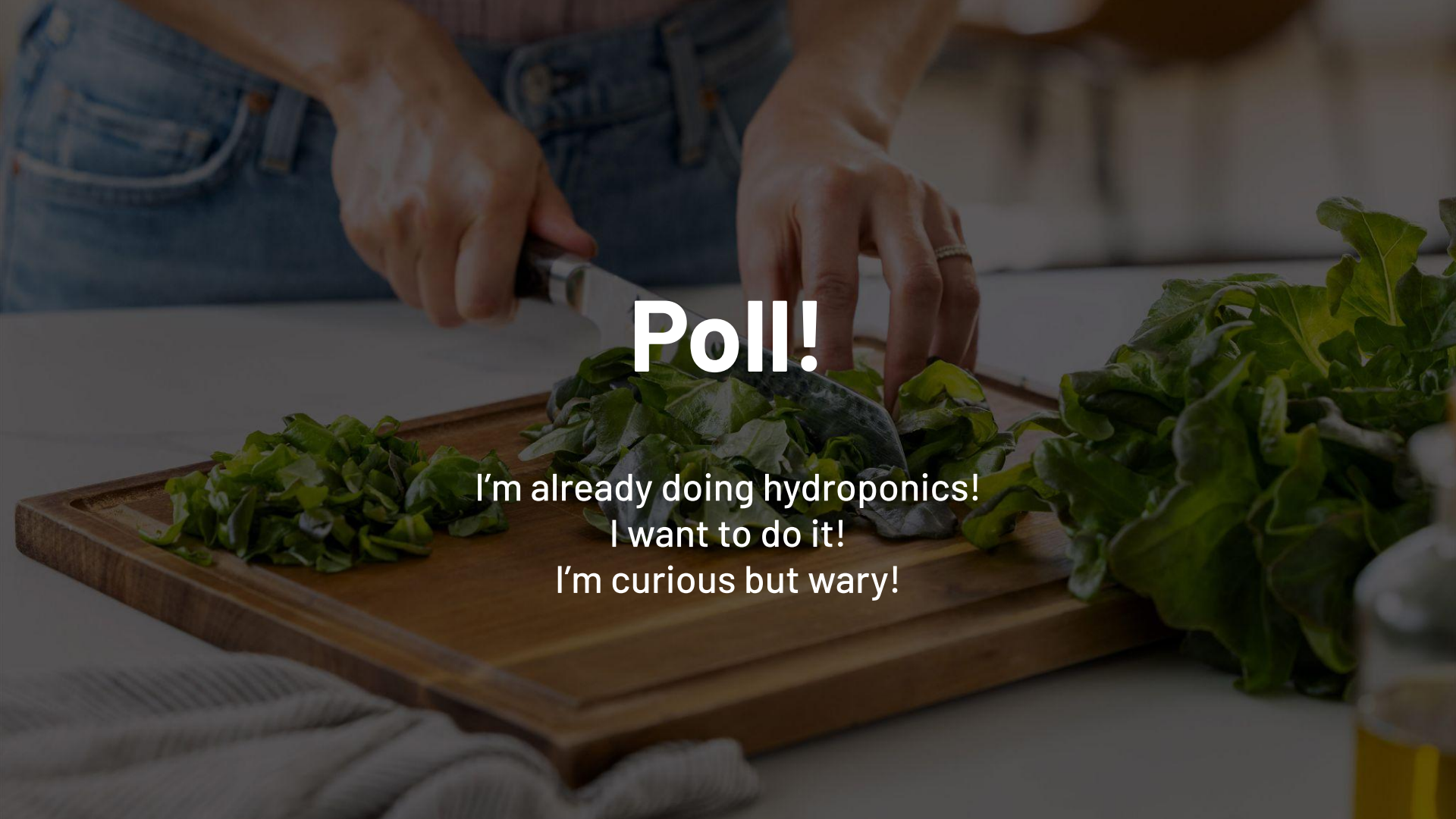


Audrey Holder
Partnership Success Manager
audrey@forkfarms.com

Agenda



- How it works
- Ways to set up your program, Ohio examples
- Q&A
- Hands-on fun!

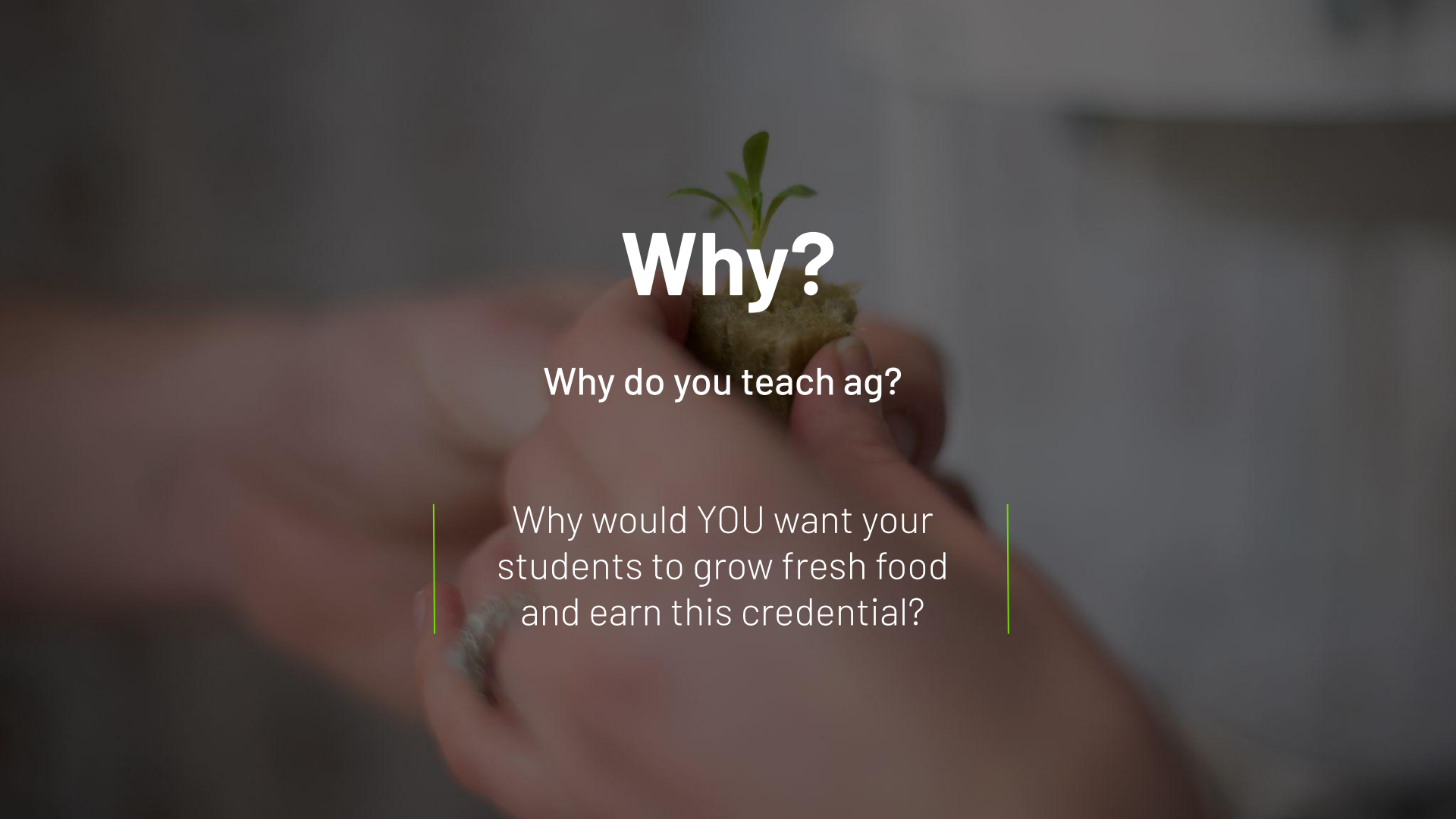
A person wearing blue jeans is shown from the waist down, standing at a white countertop. They are using a large silver knife to chop green leafy vegetables, likely arugula, on a thick wooden cutting board. The vegetables are piled on the left side of the board, while a larger bunch remains on the right. The person's hands are visible, with a ring on the left ring finger. The background is softly blurred, showing a kitchen setting. The entire image has a semi-transparent dark overlay, and white text is centered over the middle.

Poll!

I'm already doing hydroponics!

I want to do it!

I'm curious but wary!

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a small green seedling in a soil cube. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a kitchen or garden setting. The text is overlaid on the image.

Why?

Why do you teach ag?

Why would YOU want your students to grow fresh food and earn this credential?



Innovation

Skills development

Nutrition education

Contributing to community

Year-round

School-based enterprise

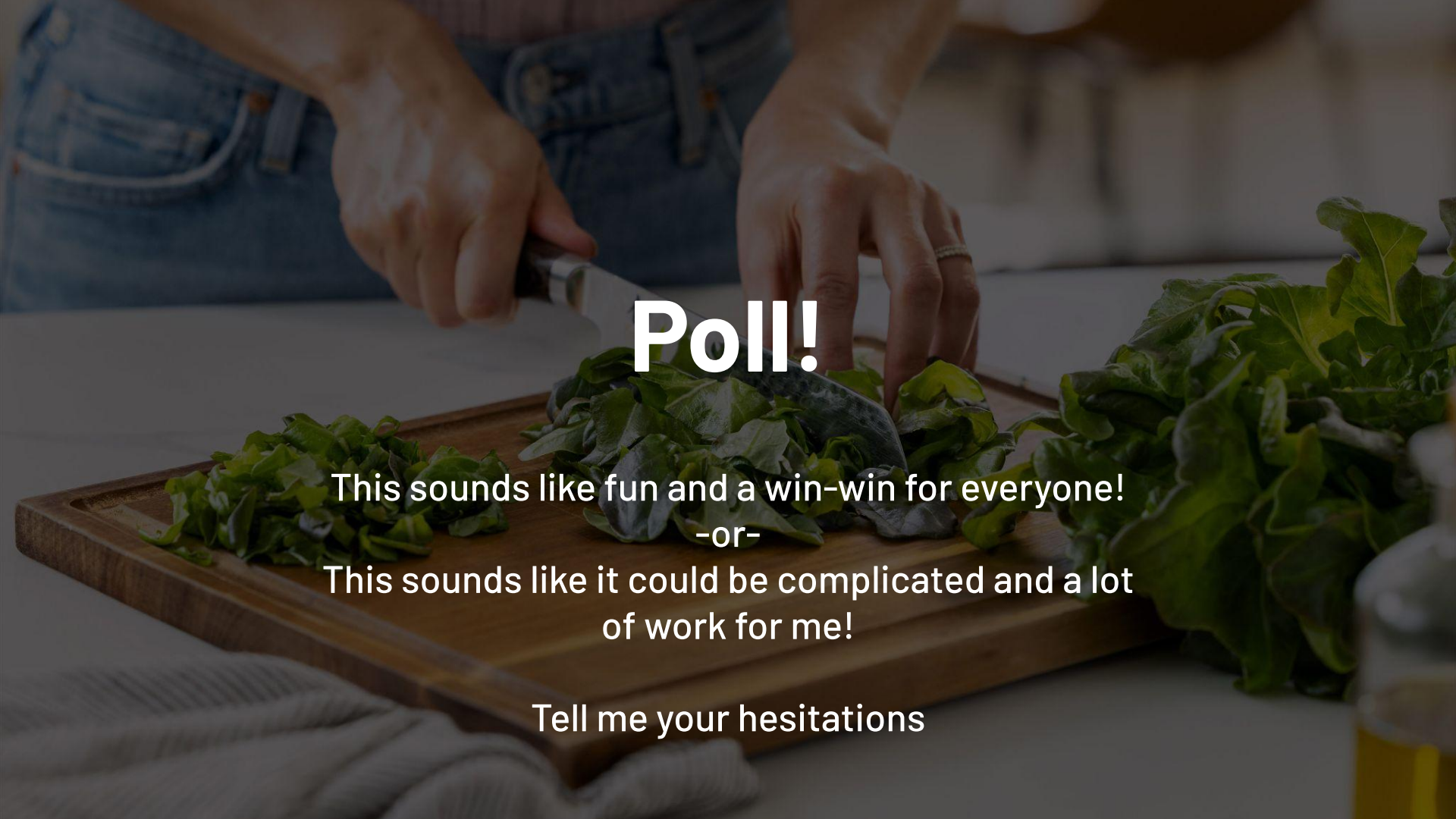
Engagement

Bringing something exciting

Urban agriculture

Career connection

Pride



Poll!

This sounds like fun and a win-win for everyone!

-or-

This sounds like it could be complicated and a lot
of work for me!

Tell me your hesitations

The image shows two vertical panels of a hydroponic wall garden. The left panel features a dense arrangement of plants, with a top section of light green, curly-leafed lettuce and a bottom section of dark green, rounded-leafed plants. The right panel also has a dense arrangement, with a top section of light green, curly-leafed lettuce and a bottom section of dark green, rounded-leafed plants. A central vertical strip shows the structural elements of the panels, including a metal frame and a small black component. The text "History and Disclaimer" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font.

History and Disclaimer

The image shows two vertical panels of a living wall system. The left panel is filled with a dense arrangement of plants, including dark green, rounded-leafed plants at the bottom and lighter green, ruffled-leafed plants at the top. The right panel also features a variety of green plants, with some showing white variegation. A central vertical strip shows the structural elements of the wall, including a metal frame and a small black component. The text "Credential Structure" is overlaid in the center in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Credential Structure

Overview



This skill certificate verifies a student's technical competency and validates foundational knowledge of and skills in hydroponics operation. Skills learned include: plant biology, seed germination, transplanting, hydroponic nutrient management, pH balancing, data collection and interpretation, water flow troubleshooting, harvesting, and crop yield economics.

Step 1: Order Equipment



A hydroponic Flex Farm is needed for students to gain hands-on experience to earn this credential. Flex Farm purchase includes access to Farmative, our online platform with our teacher training course, curriculum, and Badge Assessment program. (*Cost \$4,995*)

In Ohio there is no additional cost per student to earn the credential.

Step 2: Become a Certified Evaluator



To become certified as an evaluator, teachers must:

- Successfully pass the [Flex Farming 101 Course](#)
- Work with the Flex Farm for at least one semester

Step 3: Train Students



To certify students, teachers must:

- Teach the appropriate grade-level curriculum (grades 9-12 or grades 6-8) to the students
- Have the students operate a Flex Farm for one growth cycle from seed to harvest
- Assess the students by administering the Badge Program to each student and ensuring the student has demonstrated competency of each badge's skills
- Keep records of the completed Badge Program sheets for 1 year and be able to produce them upon request for random auditing by Fork Farms

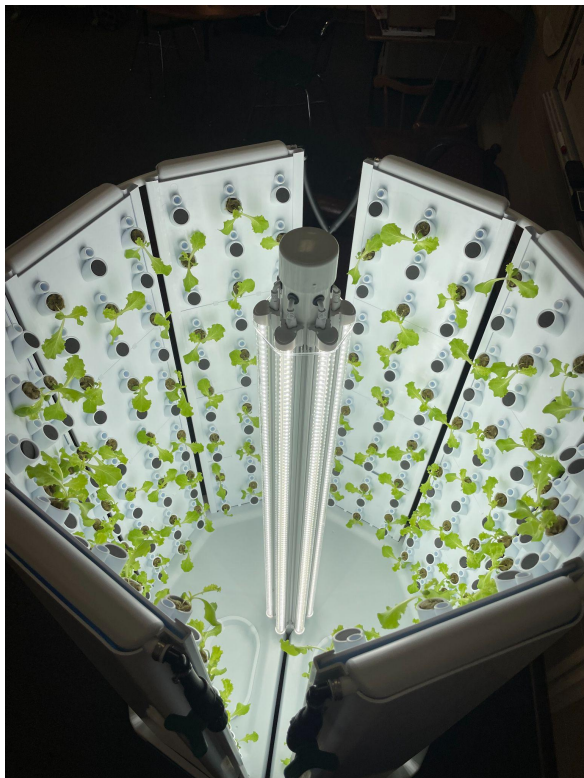
Brecksville-Broadview Heights



Seedlings going into the farm



Progress, then Harvest Day



Celebration!



Step 4: Submit Names for Completion



Upon successful completion and assessment, a student will be awarded a Certificate of Completion for Foundations of Hydroponics by Fork Farms.

Teachers use a simple web-based form on our portal to submit students for completion. We verify the teacher's credentials, send an email confirmation, and a few weeks later email a PDF of each student's certificate.

Worth 3 points in Agriculture Career Cluster



Hands-on Learning: Running the farm

The Flex Farm

**Weekly
Maintenance**

10-30 MINUTES

**Production
Cost**

\$1 PER POUND

**Every 4 Week
Harvest**

250+ ½ cup
servings

**Return on
Investment**

2 YEARS



Large-scale growing



The image shows two vertical hydroponic plant walls, one on the left and one on the right, separated by a central vertical gap. Both walls are densely packed with various types of green leafy vegetables. The top half of both walls features curly-leafed lettuce, while the bottom half features darker, more rounded leafed plants, possibly basil or a similar herb. The plants are growing in a structured, grid-like pattern, typical of modern vertical farming systems. The overall lighting is soft and even, highlighting the vibrant green colors of the foliage.

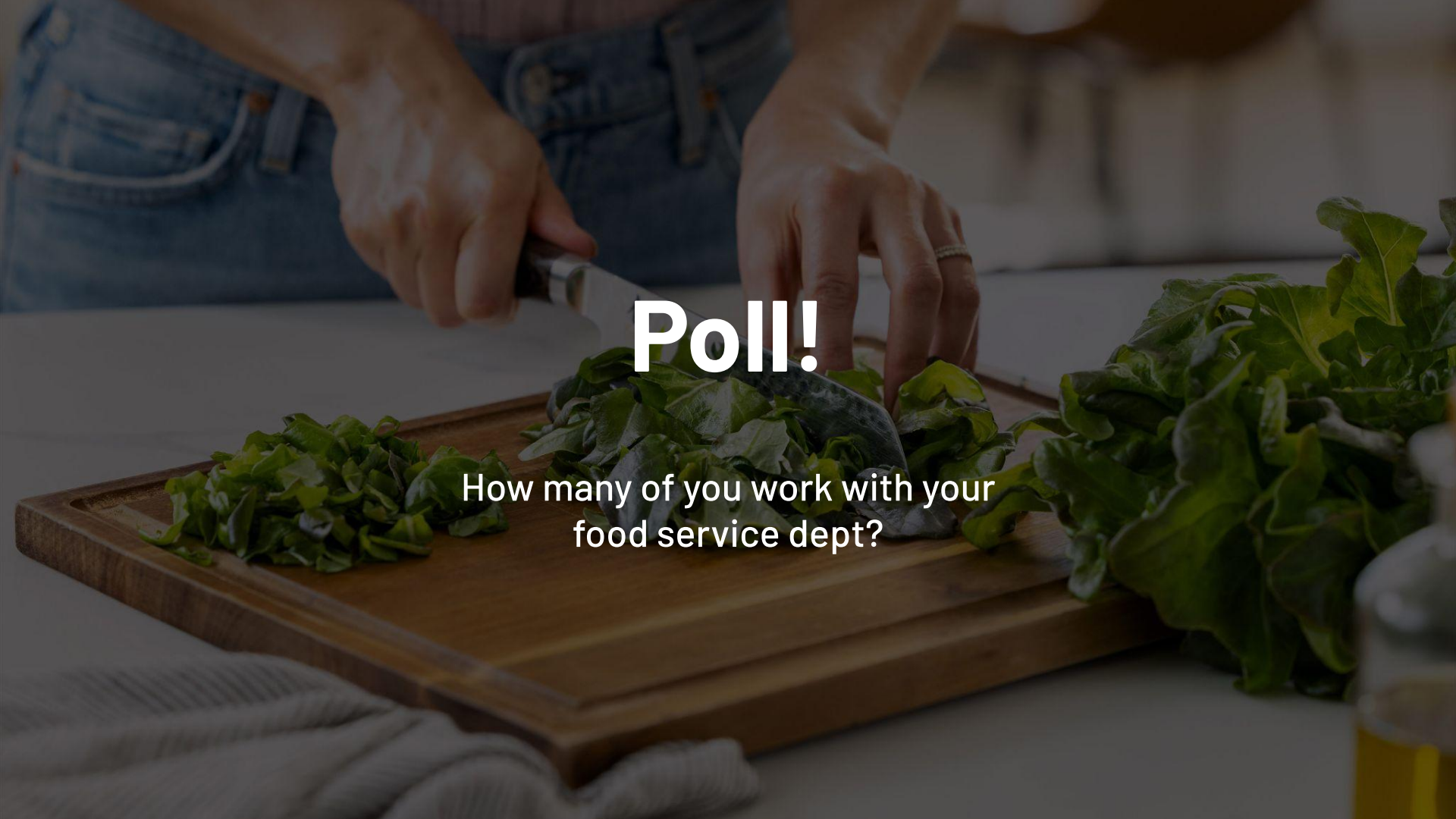
Going beyond the credential



After the harvest



Getting it on the plate

A person wearing blue jeans is shown from the waist down, standing at a white countertop. They are using a large silver knife to chop green leafy vegetables, likely arugula, on a thick wooden cutting board. The vegetables are piled on the left side of the board. To the right of the cutting board, there is a whole bunch of similar green leafy vegetables. The background is blurred, showing a kitchen setting. The overall lighting is soft and natural.

Poll!

How many of you work with your
food service dept?

Collaboration is the Key!



Nutrition Services:

- Receives high-quality, nutrient-dense fresh food
- Ensures stability in supply chain and pricing
- Offers choice and ownership to students
- Forms stronger relationships with students, uplifts staff
- Garners press - newsworthy!

Educators:

- Get an enriching hands-on project ***with something for all abilities***
- Create engagement in the classroom – pay attention, love it
- Offer real-life skills development, project management, presentation skills
- Check off boxes for learning objectives in a creative way

Result: You get to be the hero that brings an exciting district-wide initiative to everyone!

Result: Students feel a sense of ownership in the initiative = life of its own!

Large-scale growing





Ohio Inspiration!

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

Olmsted Falls



OFCS District
@OFCSDistrict

🌱 Mrs. Jones' Urban Ag. Class teamed up with the Food Service Department to bring their hydroponic lettuce and herbs into the cafeteria! These fresh ingredients are used in salads district-wide, while cafeteria scraps support the students' composting projects. 🍅 [#TheBulldogWay](#)



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Horizon Science Academy



MARKETING

Margaretta

POLAR BEAR
ORGANICS



Margaretta Local Schools

April 7 · 🌐

...



FFA RESEARCH

Zane Trace High School

ENERGY OPTIMIZATION IN HYDROPONICS

Optimizing Electricity Usage in Hydroponic Farming of Lettuce

Student Researcher(s): Charley Clyne and Wyatt Vick

Chapter: Zane Trace

State: Ohio

Category: Power, Structural and Technical

Division: VI



STUDENT INSPIRATION

Cuyahoga Falls High School



What was one of the most important things you learned going through this credential, or why was it important personally for you to earn this credential?

Earning this credential allowed me to have a high quality certification on my resume that will set me apart from other entry level candidates when applying for jobs in the hydroponic field.

What accomplishment were you most proud of during your class's work with the hydroponic farm?

The amount of food we grow, harvest, and donate to community members in need is something that myself and all of my classmates are proud of.

ART

Howland



How will I fund this?



Nutrition Services:

- Directly out of food service budget
- Approved food service equipment item
- Calculate lettuce spend, long-term savings (2 year ROI, then \$1/pound)
- Farm to school, equipment grants

Educators/General:

- Perkins funds (career tech)
- STEM grants
- Funds for health, wellness
- PTO/PTA/Educational foundation

Community:

- Local business
- Rotary Club
- Healthcare organizations, United Way
- Community/technical colleges that your district feeds into

Fork Farms

Certificate of Completion

This is to certify that

Awesome Ag Teacher

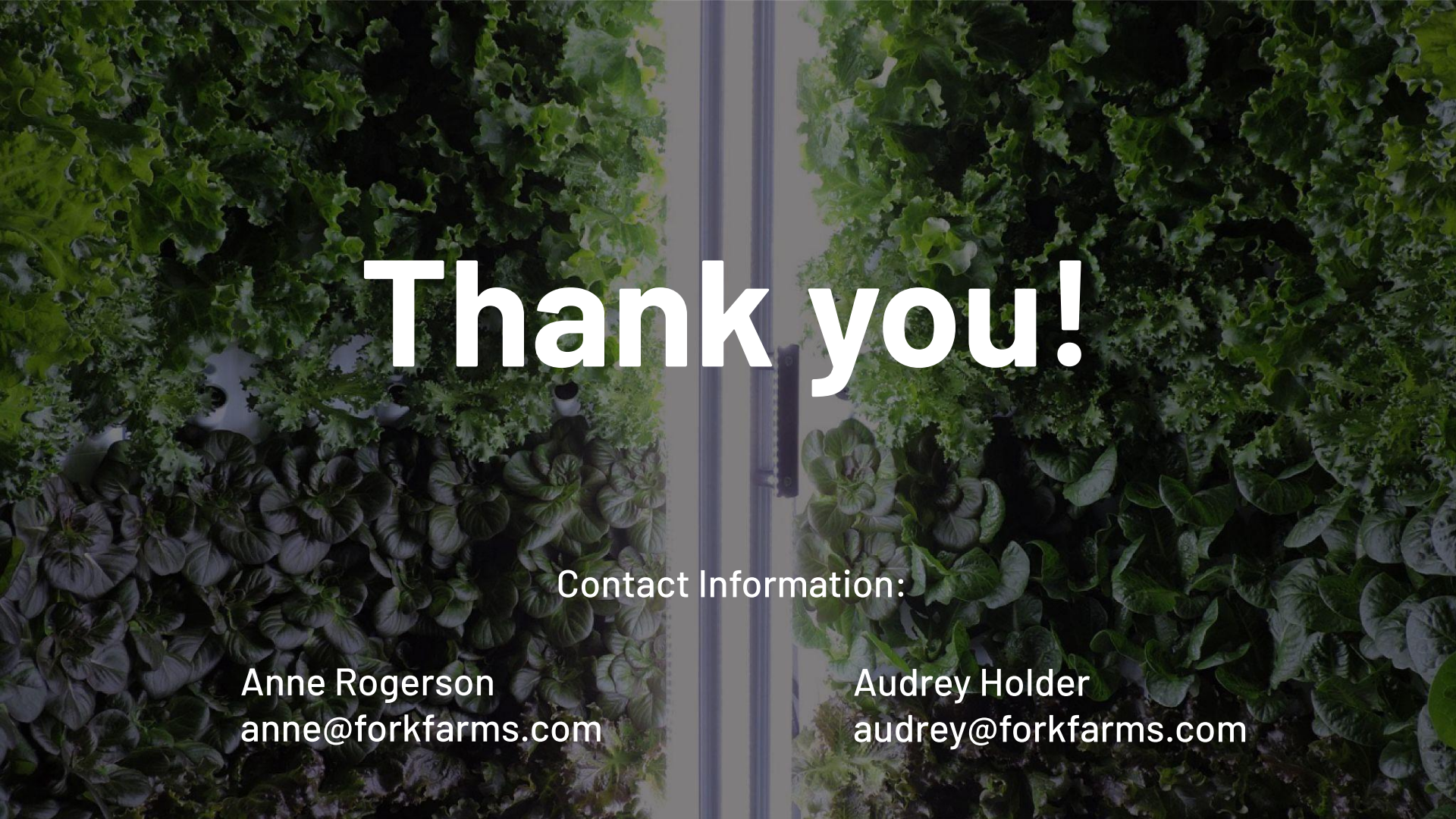
has demonstrated competency and completed all requirements to
earn the "Foundations of Hydroponics" skill certificate.



Fork Farms



Teacher Name



Thank you!

Contact Information:

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Audrey Holder
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Q + A