

National Industry-Led Carbon Farming Outreach Program

Summary report for South Australia

Program overview

DELIVERY PERIOD	June 2024 - 31 March 2026
DELIVERY PARTNER	Ag Excellence Alliance (Ag Ex) with the Grower Group Alliance (GGA) through DCCEE CFOP Program
MODEL	The project used a trusted adviser-led “train-the-trainer” model to lift adviser capability and extend practical emissions and carbon farming knowledge to farmers. Training + regional peer workshops + adviser-delivered landholder workshops + regional wrap-up workshops
ADVISERS CONTRACTED	29 (4 withdrew; 3 joined; ~28 active at end), 19 farmer workshops, 390 farmers (total 28 workshops, 622 attendees)
ADVISER PROFILE	Mixed 50%, livestock 11%, cropping 32%, business 7% (exit survey)

Exerpts taken from the full report prepared by Kristy Howard, Inspiring Excellence.

For detail, evidence sources and methodology, refer to the full MEL report sections on baseline insights, adviser journey, delivery outcomes, system-level insights at agex.org.au, or by QR code, 2026.



Delivered with funding support from the Commonwealth of Australia through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water under the Carbon Farming Outreach Program in collaboration with the Grower Group Alliance.



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Top takeaways

- **Adviser-led extension worked:** paying independent, trusted advisers to upskill and deliver workshops translated complex concepts into locally relevant, practical conversations with farmers.
- **Important shift for advisers:** engagement moved from avoidance → initiation of carbon/emissions discussions; by project end ~ 93% of advisers had farmer follow-up requests.
- **Reach was strong for a complex topic:** 29 advisers trained; advisers delivered 19 landholder workshops to ~390 participants, largely due to connection with adviser.
- **Adviser confidence improved:** 44% of advisers are confident/very confident to advise individual clients by project end, from 11%.
- **Network gains:** 100% advisers have improved network, 89% reported moderate or significant.
- **Farmer barriers are now mainly structural, not awareness:** participants want a clear value proposition, clarity on calculators, clear ROI, and evidence informed local data and case studies; uncertainty in policy/markets remains.
- **Network legacy matters: peer connection** was the most valued outcome for advisers (76%).
- **Improvements:** future programs should improve technical training quality, focus on outcomes (not attendance), provide deeper tools/resources, and fund ongoing adviser capability development.
- **Invest in advisers as “influencers”:** adviser capability is a scalable lever for farmer engagement on complex, evolving topics.
- **Help farmers ‘know their number’:** simple baselining tools and regional benchmarks are the fastest way to make conversations actionable.
- **Make the commercial case visible:** pair extension with credible ROI stories, practical trials/demos and clearer market/policy signals.
- **Keep the network alive:** CFOP created the platform; the next step is sustained coordination and deeper technical pathways (especially for livestock systems).

A different kind of extension model

Carbon farming advice is not core business for most advisers or farmers. Currently there are no clear market signals and limited commercial incentive for private advisers to invest their own time in upskilling in carbon farming or emissions reduction on farm.

Advisers started with **strong delivery skills** but a genuine **subject matter knowledge gap** and limited peer networks in the carbon space. By paying independent advisers at commercial rates to learn, collaborate and then deliver farmer facing events, Ag Ex created the conditions for capability building of farmers through their trusted advisers.

What made this approach distinct and closed the knowledge gap, was bringing together 29 independent advisers to build knowledge and confidence in the content, establish peer networks, and then take that knowledge directly into the farming community through their existing trusted relationships with farmers. Farmers attended workshops with encouragement of their adviser, which shifted advisers’ and farmers’ knowledge and skills in an area where there are few clear pathways or incentives to change.

Adviser capability and engagement shifts (baseline → end of project, self-assessed)

Measure	Baseline	End of project
Adviser knowledge: carbon farming	3.0/6 (Developing)	4.3/6 (Effective → Proficient)
Adviser knowledge: farm emissions	3.0/6 (Developing)	4.4/6 (Effective → Proficient)
Skills to help farmers decide on ER/CF actions	2.9/6 (just below Developing)	4.3/6 (Effective → Proficient)
Confidence to advise individual clients	11% high/full confidence	44% confident or very confident
Advisers actively advising on carbon/emissions	11% operational	~79% received farmer follow-up requests since CFOP commenced
Training/facilitation capability	4.03/6 (Effective)	4.4/6 (Remains strong asset, delivery infrastructure in place)
Most valued project outcome	Carbon-specific peer networks limited for many (40% limited; 7% none)	Peer connection cited by 76% as a top benefit

The shift - what changed for advisers and farmers

Adviser's behaviour has shifted; they now initiate carbon conversations, deliver workshops, use calculators with clients, and refer farmers to appropriate expertise. Several have become recognised go-to contacts within their networks.

Conversations now regularly cover scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, the distinction between carbon farming practices and formal carbon projects, and supply chain obligations. "Know your number", or establishing an emissions intensity baseline has emerged as the **most practical first step** advisers are guiding farmers toward.

For workshop participants, 78% left with meaningful knowledge gains and 67% felt confident enough to act, one way or another.

Carbon farming and emissions reduction is not alone as a topic where private advisers have no immediate commercial incentive to invest in training. Yet this is an area where farmer capability will increasingly depend on adviser knowledge and their attitudes. This model shows how structured, remunerated, peer-based capability building works. For other projects where expertise doesn't yet exist in the advisory sector at scale, the model used by Ag Ex for the CFOP project is how you build it.

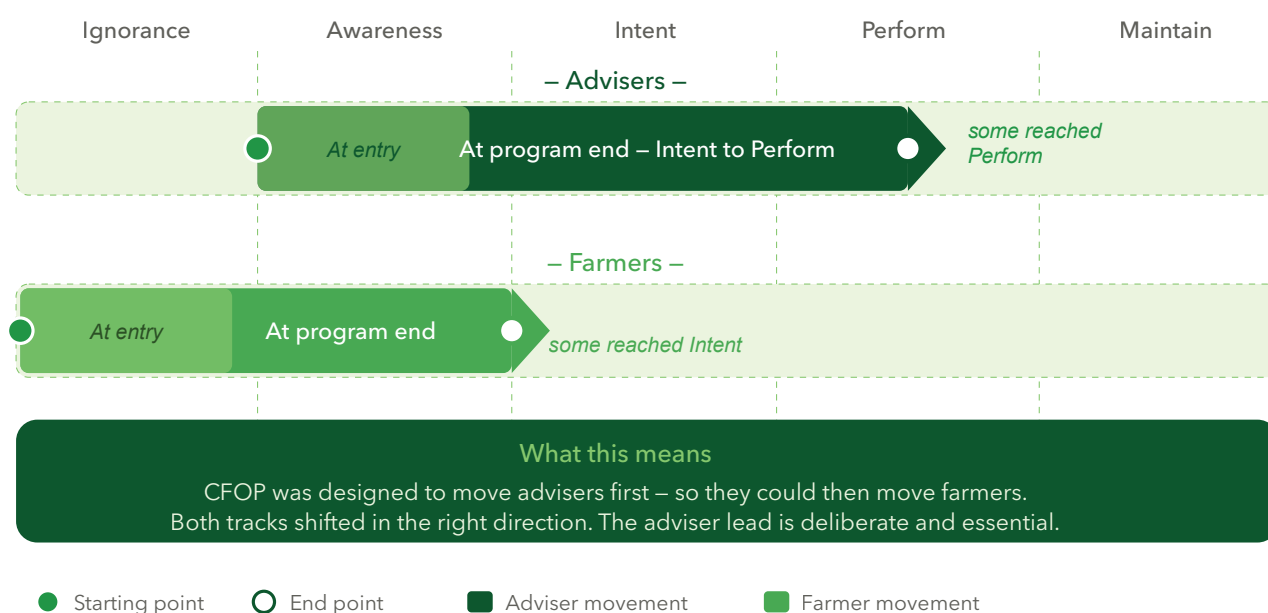


Figure: Adviser and farmer self-reported shifts in knowledge

Current adviser capability

Well equipped – doing this now

- Introductory carbon farming and emissions conversations
- Explaining carbon practices vs formal carbon projects
- Linking emissions intensity to farm productivity
- Guiding farmers through basic calculator processes
- Identifying and referring to specialist expertise

Developing capability – building with experience

- Individual farm emissions assessments
- Interpreting calculator outputs for specific farming systems
- Informing farmers on supply chain obligations and reporting

Future capability target

- Advising on practice changes to reduce emissions
- Guiding farmers to assess farm emissions and abatement opportunities
- Preparing farmers for potential future emissions reporting requirements

Landholder workshop outcomes (participant feedback)

Outcome area	What participants reported
Knowledge gain	78% reported moderate to significant knowledge gains
Confidence to make emissions-related decisions	67% rated confidence 4-5 stars after the workshop
Trainer quality	62% gave a perfect 5/5 rating and 90% rated 4-5/5 stars
Primary barrier to action	Commercial case: return on investment, business risk, affordability and unclear incentives/policy
Most requested support	Simple emissions calculators and baselining, plus local case studies and evidence informed data
Likely next steps	Further research and discussions with peers/farm teams more common than immediate practice change

What this means

Workshops successfully built understanding and confidence, but the biggest constraint to on-farm action is now system-level (economics, market signals, data evidence and tool maturity). CFOP's strongest contribution is the creation of a capable adviser network ready to support farmers as external drivers (supply chain requirements, policy and market incentives) strengthen.

What worked and what's needed next

The critical question for future emissions extension is whether the advisory system can build that deeper capability ahead of demand as CFOP has done at the foundational level, or whether it will find itself scrambling to catch up when farmers begin asking more complex and consequential questions on the back of changes to government policy or industry initiatives.

The evidence from this project suggests that proactive, structured investment in adviser capability is both effective and essential. The 29 advisers trained through CFOP are the legacy of this project. That is the most important thing CFOP has achieved: not just capability in the present, but readiness for what comes next.

What worked (enablers)	What's missing / next priorities
• Trusted relationships: advisers could bring clients who perhaps wouldn't attend without direct encouragement. • Commercial arrangement: paying advisers enabled time, influence and commitment for a public-good topic. • Peer learning: in-person regional workshops deepened understanding and built durable networks. • Practical framing: shifting conversations toward emissions intensity linked to productivity and profitability. • Coordination: Ag Ex enabled consistent delivery and support across regions.	• Higher-quality technical training from day one (early training was widely criticised as not fit-for-purpose). • Outcomes-based design (capability and behaviour change) rather than attendance/output targets. • Better tools and decision support: simple calculators, clearer guidance on tool choice (GAF/AIA), and better livestock accounting support. • Local case studies + benchmarks to strengthen the ROI/value proposition. • Ongoing network support: structured updates and curated access to evolving science/policy. • Follow-up mechanisms (small group/1:1) to translate awareness into practice change.

In the advisers' own words

Before CFOP I was not confident at all to discuss carbon topics with farmers.

Now I am more informed, connected with industry experts and able to provide guidance with confidence.

I feel more likely to have a conversation that I would have avoided before.

The legacy is a large chunk of the industry now has a strong handle on carbon accounting and emissions intensity, and we can guide farmers on the long-term consequences of our decisions.

CFOP contributes to better informed farm decision making, where emissions, productivity and profitability are considered together rather than as separate issues.

Catching up as a group of advisors has provided opportunities to share experiences and learn from each other. It is always great to network with your peers.