

U.S. Farm Stay Association

Mission and Vision

Mission: We educate travelers about U. S. farm vacations, what they are and why one might want to stay on a farm. We connect them, through our website, directly to our working farm and ranch members for more information and to book their reservations. We also educate and provide tools for farms to move into the farm stay hospitality industry, as a diversification strategy for their farming operations. We offer existing farm stay operations professional contacts and best practice resources.

Vision: We will connect urbanites to the very important issues of biodiversity, local food production, the preservation and sustainability of small family farms in the US, rural life, and the natural world; lessons it is hoped they will incorporate into both their food buying habits and their voting strategies. Besides the inherent education and connection that comes with staying on a farm, farm stays will be seen as a weekend countryside respite, replete with fresh air and local food. There will be resulting economic benefit to the host farms and the communities in which they reside as we help to create a bridge between urban and rural America.

Stakeholders: Travelers

- problem to solve:

1. looking for something fun to do,
2. lots of choices on the Internet,
3. not familiar with term 'farm stay' or concept of farm vacation. Why would one want to stay on a farm anyway?
4. want quick and easy travel arrangements including online booking

- solution:

1. offer easy-to-find information and connections to farm vacations across the country
2. SEO and Google Adwords make association website #1 for search terms: farm vacations, farm stays, staying on a farm, but also good ranking for family vacations, ecotourism, experience vacation, foodie vacation, retreat.
3. market to national travel media, travel bloggers, mommy bloggers, schools. Tractor Mac mascot?
4. provide link to individual farms' online booking engines and include Book Now button on listings

- Ability to pay farms: \$100-500/night

- Ability to pay USFSA: low to medium

Cheat Sheet

Name, age, gender: Kim, 35, F

Job: stay at home mom, did have corporate job before family

Wants and needs: to educate children about natural world and food, needs children to eat healthy, wants kids to see the world, wants family to disconnect from busy life and Internet

Hobbies: walking/biking, crafts,

Where does this person live? city

Who do they go to for advice? Friends, Internet, family

How much do they spend on services? Hair \$120, nails \$75

What is their biggest problem or pain point? Not enough time, too busy running around after work or after kids, not enough time to reconnect with partner, mobile devices are everywhere – hard to set rules for kids and adults, looking for simple life if only for weekend

Activities: Travelers

1. Problem: looking for something fun to do
Solution: offer information about and connections to farm vacations across the country

Activities:

- a. Create attractive, searchable website of U.S. farm vacations with good contact info, booking options, information, and lots of photos
 - b. Engage travelers in Q&A, sharing photos of experiences, selling the concept to friends, telling their story
 - c. Work with state and national tourism agencies to promote farm stays as their rural accommodations for agritourism
2. Problem: lots of choices on the Internet
Solution: SEO and online advertising (Google Adwords) make association website #1 for search terms leading to farm stays

Activities:

- a. Use keywords in all content: farm stay, farm vacation, rural accommodation, nature tourism, eco tourism, family vacation, foodie experience, experiential travels
 - b. ID budget and demographics to target for ads. Create based on funds and message. Assess impact on web traffic at end of run.
3. Problem: not aware of term 'farm stay' or concept of farm vacation.
Solution: market to national travel media, travel bloggers, mommy bloggers, schools.

Activities:

- a. Create marketing outreach plan to writers
 - b. Approach Tractor Mac author for potential mascot opportunity
 - c. Send out press releases – monthly (we don't do this, but we could)
 - d. Ask members to use this term in their own marketing
4. Problem: want quick and easy travel arrangements including online booking
Solution: provide link to individual farms' online booking engines and include Book Now button on listings

Activities:

- a. Make sure if farm has online booking to add Book Now button to listing
- b. Offer Hipcamp signup as an option and add link for Book Now button
- c. Provide additional link on Units to book directly (not sure we can track)

Competitive Edge: Travelers

Competitors

Vacation Rental sites (Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, Flipkey)
Expedia, Travelocity, Kayak, AlltheRooms, Booking.com, etc
Travel agents
Tours
State and local tourism agencies

Financial Assessment

Strengths

- Don't charge a booking fee to travelers using the site

- Possibility of sponsorships and advertising on site
- Member (and association member) dues

Weaknesses

- USFSA doesn't collect affiliate fee from booking engines except Hipcamp
- USFSA doesn't have own booking engine to collect % of booking revenues
- No revenue generator other than dues at the moment

Operational Assessment

Strengths

- 2 employees fairly quick at operations with 18/7 online coverage
- relatively easy to use website from front end
- customer service – speedy and polite

Weaknesses

- 2 employees don't have time to do everything all the time
- Marketing is mostly reactive; not proactive
- Web design firm is unaffordable so problems with website may go unfixed
- Website Search page can cause user confusion
- Website is not mobile friendly and no apps

Mission Performance Assessment

Strengths

- Only site to promote U.S. farm and ranch stays exclusively, with specific definition and accreditation about what a farm stay consists of
- Have gained recognition for marketing work and are often go-to for media
- Mission drives the info on the website and customer service
- Website is useful for travelers and media with Q&A section and Travelers Guide tab

Weaknesses

- Reach is still limited – most effective marketing focused on western U.S.
- Marketing is underfunded so site is not rising to top of Google searches for general vacation ideas
- Farms using 'free' booking services don't see need to join for referrals so appear on site with limited information for travelers

Statements identifying competitive edge:

USFSA is a targeted website specifically promoting lodging on working farms and ranches in the U.S. It helps to identify farm stay opportunities by interest or location, activities, events, food and more. Social media channels spread information about articles, show photos, share farming stories, and highlight specific farm stay operations. The knowledge base behind the organization (staff and board) is well versed in implementation, marketing, financials and impact of farm stays on farm operations. The media use information from the website in their articles and looks to the organization for statistics, numbers, and details. The website, while old, is filled with information and is relatively easy to use.

Evaluation: Travelers

Solution(s):

1. offer information and connections to farm vacations across the country
 - a. result(s)
 - i. Outcomes
 1. Farm stays are considered when planning a vacation
 2. Term 'farm stay' becomes familiar to American travelers (like B&B)
 3. Farm stays are embraced and supported as 'rural accommodations' by U.S. travel industry
 - ii. Impacts
 1. Americans have a better understanding of farming
 2. Guests seek out farmers' markets on return home
 3. Unplugging and reconnecting with family is appreciated
 4. Children consider becoming farmers when they grow up
 - iii. Metrics
 1. More stories about farm stay vacations in the media
 2. Website traffic steadily increases
 3. Farm stay occupancy rises
 4. % farm stays open annually due to demand and market
 - b. SEO and online advertising helps association website be #1 for search terms
 - i. Outcomes
 1. More Americans stay on farms for weekends and vacations
 2. Farms are seen as an unscripted vacation: to unwind, to unplug, to eat local, to be quiet
 3. Americans stay on farms for the first time. Then repeat regularly.
 - ii. Impacts
 1. Farm stay operations make farms sustainable and viable
 2. Rural economies in areas of farm stays benefit (jobs, business)
 3. Rural accommodations increase
 - iii. Metrics
 1. Google Analytics show increased traffic to site
 2. Google ranking of website in top 3 listings on keyword searches
 3. Brand USA/U.S. Tourism office recognizes USFSA officially
2. Market to national travel media, bloggers, schools, state and national tourism agencies
 - a. results(s)
 - i. Outcomes
 1. Children suggest farm vacations to their parents
 2. Media increases coverage of farm stays around the U.S. not just as summer vacation idea but as experiential journey for travelers
 3. Increase in interest on the part of young people to be farmers
 - ii. Impacts
 1. U.S. is seen to have an active farm stay movement
 2. Farm stays move into the realm of relaxing weekends with good food and freedom for children to roam, similar to Italy
 3. Rural accommodation seen as valuable and supported financially at national level
 - iii. Metrics
 1. % of bookings increases for farms nationally

2. % of articles and stories about farm stays increases, not just in summer months
 3. National travel office promotes farm stays
 4. Program with schools created to get families onto farms overnight
3. Provide link to individual farms' online booking engines and include Book Now button on listings
 - a. result(s)
 - i. Outcomes
 1. Accreditation standards make travelers more comfortable to use site to book directly
 2. Book Now button improves direct booking through site for seamless travel arrangements
 - ii. Impacts
 1. Farm stays become U.S. rural tourism and accommodation niche
 2. Farm stays rise to booking level of B&Bs and Vacation Rentals
 - iii. Metrics
 1. Google Analytics tracking of clicks to reservations goes up
 2. More farms add online booking to their reservation system
 3. More farms join as full members so they can have Book Now button on their listing

Value Claim: Travelers

From the farmer's market to the farm

Unplug and reconnect

Be in nature

See where your food comes from

Taste the experience

Meet the farmer who grows your food

Come sleep with a farmer

Wake up to farm life

Come home to the country. Stay on a farm or ranch

Real farmers. Real food. Really fun

The sharing economy has always included farms

USDA's Know Your Farmer. Stay for the Night

Come for a weekend. Come for a week. We'll introduce you to farming

You don't have to buy the farm to stay on the farm

City kids need the chance to play in haylofts too.

You can see the stars when you stay on a farm

Stakeholders: Farm hosts

- problem to solve:

1. want to see bookings for dollars spent on membership
2. need to find customers/don't know how to market
3. regulatory issues stop farm stay entrepreneurs, esp. insurance
4. other (bigger) choices out there for advertising

- solution:

1. create value in membership
2. provide national marketing, help with website, customer service training, marketing resources
3. find insurance company(ies) to underwrite farm stay policies nationwide, provide resources dealing with regulations, drive associate member referrals
4. promote demographics of guests using site as "best guests" to host

- ability to pay – low to medium (depending on size)

Cheat Sheet

Name, age, gender: Jackie, 45, female

Job: Farm stay host and farmer

Wants and needs: Wants to provide good hospitality and some education thrown, wants guests to be happy and well fed, wants to make enough \$\$ that the time commitment is worth pulling her away from the day-to-day farming. Needs some time off. Needs to be able to take care of family as well. Needs some help to run the farm stay

Hobbies: knitting, cooking, riding, reading, canning

Where does this person live? Rural farm

Who do they go to for advice? Their spouse, a neighbor, Extension services, other farmers

How much do they spend on services? Not a lot. Don't use many services

What is their biggest problem or pain point? Get burnt out dealing with guests on the farm, including poor treatment by some guests that make them want to quit. Not enough time for own family. Marketing their property (updating website, social media, where to advertise).

Activities: Farm Hosts

1. Problem: want to see bookings for dollars spent on membership
Solution: create value in membership outside of just bookings and give farms reason to be part of something bigger (farm stay movement)

Activities:

- a. Send monthly reports from GA with stats to prove referrals
- b. Provide other services so member feels connected to organization: private forum, business referrals, accreditation standards, hospitality education
- c. Clarify role of trade association to members vs. role of booking sites
- d. Build recognition for association members as THE rural accommodations for U.S.

2. Problem: need to find customers/don't know how to market
Solution: provide national marketing of farms, help with website, customer service training, marketing resources

Activities:

- a. Send out press releases, use HARO, promote farms and website using social media; also website design makes it easy to send URL links to media
- b. Put together Marketing 101 and Customer Service packet to share with members
- c. Create regional groups with leader to work on local marketing
- d. Make website templates and/or provide full service for website creation and updates

3. Problem: regulatory issues stop farm stay entrepreneurs, esp. insurance
Solution: find insurance company(ies) to underwrite farm stay policies nationwide, provide resources dealing with regulations, drive associate member referrals

Activities:

- a. Create agreements with several insurance brokers
- b. Ask insurance agent for regular column in farmer newsletter
- c. Provide information and resources to members, formalized with associate memberships
- d. Encourage membership in private forum to exchange ideas and best practices between farm stay operators

4. Problem: other (bigger) choices out there for advertising
Solution: encourage farm stay operators to evaluate appropriateness of 3rd party vendors to deliver their message as a farm experience

Activities:

- a. Establish accreditation standards for farm stays
- b. Educate farmers about demographics of travelers using website – 'best guests'
- c. Emphasize customer service of site

Competitive Edge: Farm Hosts

Competitors

Vacation Rentals - Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, FlipKey
Bed & Breakfasts
Hotels, inns
Disneyland, theme parks

International farm stays
National parks, public campgrounds
Dude ranches
Resorts

Financial Assessment

Strengths

- cost of membership low compared to % of booking fee or vacation rental site flat fees

Weaknesses

- dues not enough to allow association to move forward with advertisements and updated website
- old travel model of flat fee not valued like new model of booking for fee

Operational Assessment

Strengths

- members and many non-members think we bring legitimacy to movement
- quick response to listing issues and helpful with making listings look good
- web savvy, social media proficiency

Weaknesses

- ED not disciplined
- association has no marketing or budgeting plan
- scattered resources
- lacking in sponsorship and grant experience

Mission Performance Assessment

Strengths

- training materials online for startups
- accreditation standards set
- present informational listings with links to properties' personal sites
- focused on media promotion

Weaknesses

- missing many farm stay listings on site
- missing evaluation by travelers of farms (Trip Advisor API)
- many farm stays at capacity so not looking for more business, thus not joining
- mission of association is not mission of individual farms

Statements identifying competitive edge:

The USFSA is a formalized trade association with the power to apply for USDA grants, to lobby, and to speak as a representative of the U.S. farm stay movement. This gives it the authority to request of Brand USA and the national tourism association that farm stays be identified as America's rural lodging opportunity. The organization has the ability to set accreditation standards and provide training materials and resources specifically focused on on-farm lodging for the U.S. The association office is easy to contact and problems are handled personally.

Evaluations: Farm Hosts

Solution(s):

1. create value in membership outside of just bookings and give farms reason to be part of something bigger (farm stay movement)
 - a. result(s)
 - iii. Outcomes
 1. Farms are interested in being members of the association
 2. Farms begin to work together to market each other
 3. Pride in role and movement exemplified by badges on site listing
 - iv. Impacts
 1. Farm stay operators are seen as the face of family farming in U.S.
 - v. Metrics
 1. Membership increases
 2. Financials improve
2. provide national marketing of farms, help with website, customer service training, marketing resources
 - a. result(s)
 - i. Outcomes
 1. Farms better able to cope with marketing challenges
 2. Farms find local media coverage picks up and are used as resource to answer questions
 - ii. Impacts
 1. Farm stay travel niche improves in familiarity and farms find they have national reach
 - iii. Metrics
 1. Media stories increase both locally and nationally
 2. Website templates are provided to member farms (for a fee)
3. find insurance company(ies) to underwrite farm stay policies nationwide, provide resources dealing with regulations, drive associate member referrals
 - a. result(s)
 - i. Outcomes
 1. Farms are able to find reasonable insurance coverage
 2. Farms begin to understand and comply with regulatory issues
 - ii. Impacts
 1. More farm stays open or stay open due to insurance coverage
 2. Planning departments begin to incorporate farm stays into their language for permitting
 - iii. Metrics
 1. Associate membership increases (non-farm providers of products and services)
4. encourage farm stay operators to evaluate appropriateness of 3rd party vendors to deliver their message as a farm experience
 - a. result(s)
 - i. Outcomes
 1. Value proposition of Farm Stay U.S. is apparent because it speaks to the demographics of people looking to stay on farms
 2. Farmers like the guests that come for farm stay vacations, not just a place to stay
 - ii. Impacts

1. Better guests sent through Farm Stay U.S. site to farms
2. Travelers seek weekends in the country more regularly for R&R and food – similar to Italy
3. More small farms find sustainability by adding farm stays
4. Urban-rural divide is crossed at a personal level

iii. Metrics

1. Farm stay category under lodging in state tourism websites
2. Membership increases in USFSA

Value Claim: Farm Hosts

We'll tell your story to travelers

Be part of the farm stay movement

Join us as we change travel ideas in America

Farm stays aren't just for Europe anymore

Sustainable farming may include overnight guests

The sharing economy has always included farms

We send you guests that will respect who you are and what you do

Self-selected guests mean their expectations are for farm life not Disneyland or the Hilton

Let us help you

Be part of something larger and more important: educating your urban neighbors

Together we create a farm stay movement. Alone we are just a place to stay

Creating a movement will allow more small farms to remain viable

Stakeholders: Board

- problem to solve:

1. new organization
2. want to help but don't know what would be useful
3. limited time to focus on organization – have other jobs
4. don't know each other and board is virtual (coast to coast)

- solution:

1. board training; provide with lots of info about farm stays, history of org, Google Analytics reports
2. develop stakeholder info so board members can help with areas of expertise
3. ask each member for whatever is reasonable amount of time to work with their schedule
4. monthly introductions/get-to-know-you intro to each meeting

- ability to pay – low to medium

Cheat Sheet

Name, age, gender: Karen, 50, F

Job: runs a ranch stay association

Wants and needs: wants to help organization move to next level. Needs to feel movement forward and her time well spent

Hobbies: riding, cooking, visiting

Where does this person live? On a ranch

Who do they go to for advice? Former boss, tourism partners, associations

How much do they spend on services? Don't use a lot of services

What is their biggest problem or pain point? Phone conference makes fleshing out ideas difficult since not face-to-face. Doesn't know other board members except by phone. Not sure how to get ED to let her help.

Activities: Board

1. Problem: new organization

Solution: board training with lots of info about farm stays, history of org, Google Analytics reports

Activities:

- a. provide all board members with packet including Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, training pages, links to Google form non-compete, etc
- b. advise of insurance coverage
- c. check that all training by lawyer has been provided
- d. ask members to review website

2. Problem: want to help but don't know what would be useful

Solution: develop stakeholder info so board members can help with areas of expertise

Activities:

- a. finish stakeholder format and send to board
- b. Identify top 1-3 critical areas to focus on and ask for input, possible roles, time commitment
- c. Ask members what they can commit to in terms of personal interest and experience – what do they think would help

3. Problem: limited time to focus on organization – have other jobs

Solution: ask each member for whatever is reasonable amount of time to work with their schedule

Activities:

- a. E.D. checks in personally with all members
- b. find out times of year slowest for each member

4. Problem: don't know each other and board is virtual (coast to coast)

Solution: monthly introductions/get-to-know-you intro to each meeting

Activities:

- a. expanded introductions each meeting with info about what going on in business
- b. bio and photo sent to everyone (1x thing). Maybe Google Docs holds these?
- c. board retreat one time per year
- d. change format for board meetings (e.g. Skype or some other program that allows for real time visual interface)

Competitive Edge: Board

Competitors

- Job
- Other boards
- Other commitments outside of work
- Family

Financial Assessment

Strengths

- some board members have access to meeting locations for retreat
- some board members have access to clients willing to sponsor organization

Weaknesses

- board members do not have a lot of wealth

Operational Assessment

Strengths

- various backgrounds provide broad spectrum of experience
- meetings held monthly
- members provide assistance outside of meetings to ED

Weaknesses

- not all board members available for majority of meetings
- phone conferences are ineffective way to have substantive meetings

Mission Performance Assessment

Strengths

- well rounded board allows for a range of opinion and advice for how to achieve mission
- all board members are interested in seeing the mission of USFSA move forward and are passionate about the success of the farm stay movement

Weaknesses

- ED does not usually involve board at ground level other than to ask advice
- board meetings ineffective way to brainstorm direction and overcoming challenges since they are not face-to-face

Statements identifying competitive edge:

The board for USFSA is diverse in background with farm and ranch stay operators, farm extension and agritourism professionals, finance, marketing, IT/travel business start-up, and psychology. There is enthusiasm for the mission and interest in helping the organization to succeed (or at least to clarify with the founder a direction for success – whatever that looks like). This is the only farm stay association in the U.S. and as such has the opportunity to break out with a new travel niche in the U.S. tourism market, something in which the board appears interested.

Evaluation: Board

- solution:

1. board training with lots of info about farm stays, history of org, Google Analytics reports
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 1. board understands role of organization and their responsibilities
 2. board sees opportunities and challenges more clearly
 - ii. impact
 1. board is effective in driving mission and vision of organization
 - iii. metrics
 1. packets put together and delivered to board members at start of term
 2. develop stakeholder info report so board members can help with areas of expertise
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 1. board members begin to understand the “customers” of the association
 2. board members see where their expertise might be useful
 - ii. impact
 1. more buy-in from board and clarity of where they can help
 - iii. metrics
 1. board members provide insight into stakeholder positions and add suggestions or challenges to report info
 2. # of goals reached to help with top 3 critical issues
 3. ask each member for whatever is reasonable amount of time to work with their schedule
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 1. ED will be able to include various board members in decision making or to act as sounding board outside of monthly meetings
 - ii. Impact
 1. Weight for critical issues spread out to board for feedback and advice
 - iii. Metrics
 1. Review of board involvement – hours, reports, conversations
 4. monthly introductions/get-to-know-you intro to each meeting
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 1. board understands what other expertise is in the group
 2. board more comfortable working together
 - ii. impact
 1. organization moves forward with consistent board
 2. public declaration on website of board expertise behind the organization
 - iii. metrics
 1. bio/photo info for each board member added to website under new tab in the About section

Value Claim: Board

Helping to start the farm stay movement

Use your expertise to make the USFSA a successful organization

Passionate about the opportunities farms provide for visitors; passionate about the sustainability promised when farms diversify with farm stays

Interested in the challenges of the travel industry for the farm stay movement

Appreciate the rural experience

Motivated to be a match maker for the farmer and the traveler

Bringing an outside world view to the challenges of creating a U.S. farm stay travel niche

Stakeholders: Grantors

- problem to solve:

1. need to feel organization can survive on its own
2. other needy organizations
3. local and regional when USFSA is national
4. this organization doesn't fit neatly into any specific parameters

- solution(s)

1. provide business plan and list of potential opportunities
2. explain impact of programs – for rural farmers and urbanite travelers
3. speak to local and regional angle but describe national reach
4. explain growth in agritourism and use examples from other countries

- ability to pay: medium to high

Cheat Sheet

Name, age, gender: USDA DC grants office

Job: farm grants

Wants and needs: grants with large impact on the number of people affected, economic benefit to rural communities, well written proposals that fit within the parameters of the grant, qualified applications

Where can this office be found? Washington DC

Who do they go to for advice? Ag panels who apply to read the grants

What is their biggest problem or pain point? Large number of applicants, complicated application process for many who have never submitted grants so lots of calls and mistakes, can't help applicants if problem is with grants.gov

Activities: Grantors

1. Problem: need to feel organization can survive on its own
Solution: provide business plan and list of potential opportunities

Activities:

- a. write business plan with 5 year projection
- b. line up potential opportunities with cost/benefit analysis
- c. provide stats from travel and USDA census

2. Problem: other needy organizations
Solution: explain impact of programs

Activities:

- a. speak to diversified farming, rural economic development, rural-urban divide
- b. find grantors that deal with the above – widen search
- c. talk to grantor staff directly

3. Problem: local and regional grants when USFSA is national org
Solution: take local/regional angle but describe national reach

Activities:

- a. use local/regional submission as model for replication across U.S.
- b. research national grants and foundations

4. Problem: doesn't fit neatly into specific parameters of grant focus
Solution: explain importance of agritourism and how other countries use it to benefit

Activities:

- a. research European models – outcomes and impacts
- b. request one USDA or tourism grant focused solely on agritourism
- c. solicit assistance of political representatives

Competitive Edge: Grantors

Competitors

Any organization applying for a grant
Professional grant writers
Universities

Financial Assessment

Strengths

- clear financials to date show need

Weaknesses

- no money to pay for professional grant writer
- fiduciary responsibility experience limited
- matching grants pose a problem
- many grants do not allow for payroll/operations expenses

Operational Assessment

Strengths

- hands-on ED and assistant
- not so large that go off target with grant

Weaknesses

- time consuming to fill out grants and reports, taking staff away from other commitments

Mission Performance Assessment

Strengths

- allows greater ability to improve organization's goals and reach them

Weaknesses

- grant mission may not be great fit for USFSA mission and distract from more critical issues just to win \$\$
- hard to find grants focused on agritourism goals

Statements identifying competitive edge:

USFSA does not have a competitive edge with grantors and is in fact at a disadvantage since it has little experience writing grants, lacks time to apply for them and carry out all the metrics if it gets one, is a 501c6 instead of 501c3 that many grantors focus on, and is not a recognizable institution to many grantors. Because USFSA works in the world of agritourism, it is also at a disadvantage since this is a misunderstood and underfunded area in which neither the USDA nor tourism feel responsible to invest.

Evaluation: Grantors

- solution(s)

1. provide business plan and list of potential opportunities
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 - allow grantors view into mission, vision, and stakeholders
 - ii. impact
 - USFSA gains credibility as national organization with a mission
 - iii. metrics
 - production of a business plan and list of opportunities
2. explain impact of programs
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 - readers understand the concept as a diversification strategy for a working farm and a way to educate public about food and farming
 - ii. impact
 - grantors widen view of ag and tourism and look for ways to support the agritourism model
 - iii. metrics
 - more grants awarded to agritourism operations
 - more grants written for agritourism applications
3. speak to local and regional angle but describe national reach
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 - grants written with manageable metrics for USFSA to quantify
 - grant ask benefits farms nationally for some of the outputs
 - ii. impact
 - model from grant replicated across the country
 - iii. metrics
 - grant awarded
4. explain growth in agritourism and use examples from other countries
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 - USFSA model compared to Italian and UK models for impacts
 - ii. impact
 - states look more seriously at supporting agritourism as a rural economic development and tourism model
 - iii. metrics
 - report created and information presented in grant applications and conferences

Value Claim: Grantors

Let's not send all our travelers to Italy for an agriturismo when we have farm stays right here in the U.S.

Family farms built America. Let's give Americans the chance to meet these farmers.

Diversification for small farm sustainability is entrepreneurial, so let's support it

A farm stay is lodging offered on a working farm. That would be a WORKING farm.

We are the face of farming. "Know your Farmer" never rang so true.

We need your support. Just look at what Europe has been able to accomplish by supporting a farm stay agritourism model.

If not you, then who should we look to? Don't devalue us just because we are trying something that is not tied to commodity pricing or hands in the dirt because we do that too.

Stakeholders: Sponsors

- problem to solve:

1. how does alignment with USFSA help sponsor business
2. which companies have customers that overlap in demographics with USFSA
3. does USFSA have enough visibility
4. pricing of sponsorships

- solution(s)

1. provide one-sheet about USFSA mission and goals, also reasons for alignment with co.
2. look for matches on vision, but also at LOHAS brand companies
3. be honest about site traffic and how program is expected to increase with cooperation of sponsor.
4. research pricing, ask company what seems fair, work a deal that is beneficial to both

- ability to pay: medium to high

Cheat Sheet

Name, age, gender: Whole Foods

Job: focuses on fresh, organic, trending foods

Wants and needs: to be seen as local; to be seen as healthful; to be seen as current/trendy/organic

Who do they go to for advice? Marketing department, (stockholders ?), regional managers

What is their biggest problem or pain point? Perceived by many as too expensive and taking advantage of fresh food trend not for vision but for profit

Activities: Sponsors

1. Problem: how does alignment with USFSA help sponsor business

Solution: provide one-sheet about USFSA mission and goals, also reasons why the match would work in the interests of the sponsor

Activities:

- a. identify demographics of USFSA both for website and social media channels, and vision and mission of organization, and compile into easy-to-read format
- b. research companies that appear to have alignments of vision and list commonalities with USFSA
- c. put together individualized proposals that identify value of relationship to sponsor

2. Problem: which companies have customers that overlap in demographics with USFSA

Solution: look for matches on vision, but also at LOHAS (lifestyle of health and sustainability) brand companies

Activities:

- a. Research demographic overlaps with LOHAS companies
- b. Look through LOHAS catalogues for ideas
- c. come up with list culled from own research, board contacts, member suggestions

3. Problem: USFSA visibility and online traffic

Solution: take traffic as a challenge that can be boosted with sponsorship

Activities:

- a. Supply Google Analytics to sponsor
- b. Create mock sponsorship opportunities
- c. Brainstorm with board about how to grow traffic outside of sponsorship

4. Problem: how to price sponsorships

Solution: research pricing, ask company what seems fair, work a deal that is beneficial to both

Activities:

- a. Look online for different sponsors and sponsorship ideas, then try to talk to companies that have sponsors
- b. Break Farm Stay U.S. site into most important parts and look at value this might bring to a sponsor or sponsors
- c. Ask potential sponsors what they would pay

Competitive Edge: Sponsors

Competitors

Companies with better alignment

501c3s

B&B websites

Travel websites

Financial Assessment

Strengths

- no sponsor yet so wide open to create largest benefit
- able to ask farms for gift certificates and lodging prizes

Weaknesses

- not familiar with sponsorship pricing (don't want to leave money on the table but also don't want to scare sponsors away)

Operational Assessment

Strengths

- employees can research sponsors and quiz members about experience in sponsorships
- farms and board can suggest sponsors

Weaknesses

- limited resources to manage the details of a sponsorship arrangement
- limited knowledge of how to proceed with sponsors

Mission Performance Assessment

Strengths

- passionate about mission = easier sale to sponsor
- integrity of employees to work hard for sponsor benefit

Weaknesses

- may not ask the right questions of sponsors and what they need out of sponsorship

Statements identifying competitive edge:

Farm stays are a new travel niche in U.S. with a national mission that benefits both rural and urban lifestyles through education, employment and understanding of food at its source. We have a good story to tell in visuals and in writing. We are the romantic visioning of agriculture and American heritage. Aligning messages will provide good will towards sponsors since a variety of messages could be created re: food, fun, rural, animals, family, unplugging, organic, landscapes, stars, hospitality, cooking, countryside, farming, and more.

Evaluation: Sponsors

- solution(s)

1. provide one-sheet about USFSA mission and goals, also reasons why the match would work in the interests of the sponsor
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 1. companies with similar vision or demographics interested in becoming sponsors
 2. USFSA happy with fit and feels beneficial to brand
 - ii. Impact
 1. Association with sponsor(s) gives USFSA farms visibility to larger market segments
 - iii. Metrics
 1. Find 10-15 possible sponsors to approach
2. look for matches on vision, but also at LOHAS brand companies
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 1. find companies interested in aligning themselves with USFSA
 2. income from sponsorship and alignment with company(ies) helps to build traffic on website
 - ii. impact
 1. increased marketing reach helps identify farm stays as something cool to add to travel plans
 - iii. Metrics
 1. 1-2 companies become sponsors of USFSA
3. take traffic as a challenge that can be boosted with sponsorship
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 1. more farm stays join USFSA due to increased traffic to site from sponsor's promotions
 - ii. impact
 1. website reflects most of farm stays in U.S., paid and unpaid
 - iii. metrics
 1. Traffic on website increases
 2. Farm stays report increased bookings
4. research pricing, ask company what seems fair, work a deal that is beneficial to both
 - a. result(s)
 - i. outcomes
 1. members like sponsor association
 2. members want to work with sponsors
 - ii. impact
 1. USFSA members see bigger picture – part of a movement
 2. Sponsor sees benefit to bottom line through association with USFSA
 - iii. Metrics
 1. Some farm members offer to do deals with sponsor

Value Claim: Sponsors

Our guests are your customers – or they could be

We will link you to the land with dirt and experience

Get your hands dirty beside us

Join us to heal a rural-urban divide

Know your farmer – for so many reasons

American Gothic at any age

We help feed the world one person at a time

Do you really want kids to grow up thinking eggs come from the grocery store?

Where else can you jump in mud puddles and no one cares?

We can help you speak to your customers one-on-one

Don't you want your customers to think you are farm cool?

Guests that stay with us, play with us

We make lasting impressions on our guests. Isn't that something you would like to do too?

Stakeholders: Employees

- problem to solve:

1. getting paid
2. learning how to run a non-profit well
3. accommodating 24/7 nature of the Internet

- solution(s)

1. increase revenue streams
2. training – online and from association
3. determine schedule that is fair

- ability to pay: low

Cheat Sheet

Name, age, gender: Scottie, 60+, F

Job: ED

Wants and needs: organization to be sustainable into the future; to get paid for working (or paid back)

Where can this personal be found? On farm

Hobbies: riding, reading, walking

Who do they go to for advice? Other farms, board, spouse, assistant

How much to they spend on services? Not many services but going rate for hair and house cleaning

What is their biggest problem or pain point? Organization does not create enough extra profit for ED payroll or reimbursement of initial investment in business

Activities: Employees

1. Problem: getting paid
Solution: increase revenue stream of USFSA

Activities:

- a. Identify all revenue streams possible
- b. Decide with board biggest bang for buck long term
- c. Decide on pay scale for ED now and in future

2. Problem: learning how to run a nonprofit well
Solution: training

Activities:

- a. Find training blogs on nonprofits to follow and study
- b. Find mentor

3. Problem: 24/7 nature of Internet business
Solution: determine fair schedule

Activities:

- a. Work out schedule with assistant so no burn out
- b. Ask board to check in every now and again to make sure site is working. Also on social media channels
- c. Set up alert system if problem with site

Competitive Edge: Employees

Competitors

Contract workers
Grant writers

Financial Assessment

Strengths

- ED doesn't require payroll
- assistant paid fair market wage

Weakness

- future ED will need to be hired with wage
- current assistant no raises for second year

Operational Assessment

Strengths

- employees understand all roles/jobs/systems necessary to run organization
- employees keep track of business 18/7

Weaknesses

- employee burnout
- restricted by location in rural area of NW, not near large metro area

Mission Performance Assessment

Strengths

- employees created mission and vision
- employees passionate about mission and vision and work tirelessly to promote it

Weaknesses

- too close to organization so can't envision new strategies well

Statements identifying competitive edge:

USFSA's paid employee has been with the organization since the first year of launch. She is paid a fair wage with regular increases until 2015. She has been offered telecommuting, a more relaxed schedule, and laundry service in exchange for a raise. The ED does not require compensation to stay in the job due to founding the company but realizes the organization needs to figure out a way to pay for her replacement. Employees are dedicated to doing their best for USFSA and know a lot of the members, the landscape of the business, the website program and operations. The assistant is a good photographer and shares on social media outside of work.

Evaluation: Employees

- solution(s)

1. increase revenue stream

a. result(s)

i. outcomes

1. ED gets paid salary
2. more funding for operations, mission, marketing
3. ED repaid initial investment

ii. Impact

1. Organization will continue
2. Succession plan for ED is assured

iii. Metrics

1. 1-2 sponsors secured
2. Enough \$\$ in bank account to pay ED salary

2. training for nonprofit success

a. result(s)

i. outcomes

1. smooth running organization where everyone know what's expected of them
2. board members are excited and involved in organization's success

ii. impact

1. board meetings are strategic not just reviews
2. organization moves forward

iii. metrics

1. classes taken
2. new, consistent systems implemented

3. determine fair schedule

a. result(s)

i. outcomes

1. assistant and ED feel relief from on-call status
2. more defined schedules set

ii. impact

1. less burnout

iii. metrics

1. alert system installed
2. board members report on findings

Value Claim: Employees

Be a part of something big

Be on the forefront of the farm stay movement

Help to create the farm stay movement

Be there for the farmers. Be there for the travelers

Use your imagination. What would the best association in the world look like

Tell a good story to create the movement

Evaluation

Outcome and impact statements are the hypothesis. Metrics tell you if you have achieved it

OUTCOMES (changes in behavior or circumstance that you expect to see in the lives of people you serve)

IMPACTS (represent community level or global change you produce)

METRICS (measurable behaviors, beliefs, or circumstances occurring as a result of what you do)

Value Claim

Who you are. What you do. Why it matters.