



# Nebraska's Guide to Agri-Tourism & Eco-Tourism Development



## A Handbook for Developing an Agri-Tourism/Eco-Tourism Business

Sponsored by: Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, KAAPA Country Adventures, and University of Nebraska Rural Initiative.



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**Developed by:**

**Nebraska Department of Economic Development  
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Nebraska Department of Agriculture  
University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension  
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
KAAPA Country Adventures  
Nebraska Rural Initiative  
AAA Nebraska and Cornhusker Motor Club foundation

This publication was developed by the Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism.  
Dan Curran, Director

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Cover and back-cover design and development by: Snitily Carr.



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## Introduction

This handbook is a starting point for people who are ready to take the next step toward expanding their farm or ranch operations, or people who just want to learn more; to see if agritourism is a right fit for them.

In here, you'll find information about:

- Many types of agritourism businesses—from small crop production operations, to large-scale working farms and ranches—that offer products, services and activities.
- The importance of research and preplanning.
- How to write a business plan and estimate revenue potential.
- The economic feasibility of agritourism businesses.
- Future planning and success that lead to growth and sustainability.
- Many valuable resources to help you further explore issues, information, and assistance related to your unique situation.



## Section 1

### Understanding Agritourism

While agritourism may be new to some, it has been practiced by Nebraskans who, for generations, have served up agricultural products and service with warm hospitality and down to earth charm. Today's growing interest in agritourism offers even greater opportunities for landowners and rural communities alike. Issues, such as high fuel prices, a weakening economy and safety concerns in the U.S. and abroad are driving travelers' preferences for highway travel, short getaways, and visits to small towns and rural areas. That's where agritourism comes in. With its broad range of opportunities and capacity for creativity and imagination, agritourism is a natural fit for most ag operations given the right blend of commitment, planning, and resources from all stakeholders.

#### What is Agritourism?

By definition, Agritourism is:

***An alternative enterprise allowing an agricultural operation to earn higher profits by replacing or supplementing traditional agricultural operations with innovative and sustainable venture.***

87 million people have taken a trip to a rural destination within the past three years.

"Rural Tourism: Small Towns and Villages Appeal to U. S. Travelers," TIA, 2001

Agricultural tourism enterprises allow visitors to gain that agricultural "experience". It is a way of 'adding value' to agricultural products or services before leaving the farm or ranch. For the operator, the aim is to create a sustainable income stream, or augment existing revenues. Agritourism is families working together to provide a service for others. It allows families to rely on each other's strengths and watch them grow. Today, diversification seems to be as important to a successful agricultural operation as ever before.

Agritourism takes on many forms. It can:

- produce fun, entertainment, recreation, education, or nature-based activities;
- produce new or unique crops or livestock, or add value to traditional agricultural products;
- rely on traditional farm practices, or use alternative methods, such as organic systems;
- produce food and fiber, or have little to do with agriculture (for example, from meals served as part of Bed & Breakfast packages to creating corn mazes);
- be labor or resource intensive, or require few inputs; and
- operate seasonally or year-round.

Agritourism offers a broad range of opportunities. With a little imagination, creativity, and a lot of dedication, you can make this a fun and successful venture.

Other enterprising ventures with similar characteristics, but different definitions include:

**Nature Tourism/Ecotourism**—environmentally responsible travel to relatively undisturbed areas to enjoy and appreciate nature and accompanying social and cultural features, and to learn about the need for preserving natural and cultural resources.

**Cultural and Heritage Tourism**—historic and cultural attractions that teach visitors about the past and present; an experience of places and activities (through the use of irreplaceable historic, cultural, and natural resources) that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.

**Geotourism**—sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place being visited. A study by TIA and *National Geographic Traveler* identified 55 million Americans, predominantly from the Baby Boom generation, who considered themselves a new breed of tourists...geotourists to be exact.

**No matter the type of venture, farmers and ranchers share a common theme:  
They rely on the soil, water, air, plants, wildlife, and scenery found on  
their land to keep their family on the farm and the farm in their  
family.**

To simplify matters, “agritourism” in the context of this handbook also will represent nature tourism, ecotourism and cultural and heritage tourism.

Untapped agricultural resources, such as space, aesthetics, learning experiences, adventure, and guests being able to pursue their own interests away from crowds are proving to be attractive to a wide range of tourists.

Many families are becoming more interested in their rural roots and want to re-explore familiar terrain.

Other tourists are interested in the diversity of natural and cultural resources. They want to be immersed in rich natural, cultural and historical experiences.

Educational opportunities and experiences exist for young and old alike. Rural recreation can provide a measure of wellness or relaxation for people who need time away from today’s fast-paced lifestyles, or who want to get back to nature.

For guests, farm and ranch visits can offer a unique experience unlike any other. The bottom line is that a growing number of tourists are

interested in immersing themselves in agricultural-related experiences and in buying agricultural products. Consequently, many farmers and ranchers sell both services and products.

Some businesses may be open 365 days of the year while others

are open for a few weekends in the fall. Yet, all offer unique farm or ranch experiences that appeal to a wide range of visitors. Working farms, ranches and agricultural operations are alive with sound, smells, character, and a daily routine ingrained in the lives of the farmers and ranchers/operators, their employees, and all who inhabit the land and barns.

*“We are not farming for food. We are  
farming for wildlife.”*

Jeff Pribbeno,  
Open Country Adventures, Imperial, NE

**63 million Americans  
visit farms annually.**

*USDA-NRCS, National Survey  
on Recreation and the  
Environment*



## **List of Possibilities**

To get you thinking about your operation and assets that may be augmented through a tourism/recreational enterprise expansion, following is a list of potential activities limited only by imagination and regulations. Ultimately, you may choose one or more ideas to incorporate into your new business. While many are listed under one category, they also may qualify for other categories.

### **Recreation and Education**

- Farm tours
- Workshops/demonstrations
  - Milking
  - Wool processing
  - Apple pressing/cider
  - Planting a tree/shrub
- Cattle roping/branding
- Harvest experiences
- Hunting
- Trapping
- Clay bird shooting
- Game preserves
- Archery
- Fishing
- Fish feeding/watching
- Bird/wildlife watching
- Horseback riding
- Swimming, canoeing, inner tubing
- Skating/Sledding
- Scenic trails
  - Walking, Biking, Cross country skiing
- Race courses
  - ATV Course
  - Pedal tractors
- Themes
  - Family play area
- Outdoor games
  - Horseshoeing
  - Miniature Golf
- Aerial tours
- Stargazing
- Pumpkin farm
- **Livestock and Poultry**
- Horseback riding

- Petting farms/exotic animal farms
- **Service**
- Guest ranch
- Farm/ranch vacations
- Bed and Breakfast
- Cabin rentals
- Camping
- Restaurants
- Picnic sites
- Chuck wagon dinners
- Food concessions
- Canoe access
- Wagon/sleigh/jeep rides/ATV rides
- Wildlife viewing and photography
- Farm-themed playground
- Guided fishing, hunting and birding
- Ag-related crafts/gifts/products
- Summer home time shares
- **Value- Added and Direct Sales**
- U-pick operations
- Roadside sales
- Greenhouses to extend growing season
- Rent-a-space gardening
- Red meat-buffalo, beef, pork, goat, ostrich, rabbit, veal
- Poultry- chicken, ducks, geese, turkeys, eggs
- Dairy products- cheese, milk, yogurt, ice cream
- Breads, jams, pie, jellies, condiments
- Fiber- wool

### **Vegetable and Other Crops**

- Tree farm
- Winery and microbrewery tours
- Organic food and feed grain production
- Birdseed
- Herbs
- Indian corn
- Popcorn
- Gourds-ornamental
- Hay and straw
- Crop art
  - Mazes
- **Special Events**
- Farmers' market
- Roadside stand/u-pick operations farm sales
- Festival
  - Heritage
  - Cultural
- Farm Schools
  - Cooking classes
  - Workshops
  - Apple butter making
  - Wool processing
- Tours
  - Vineyard/winery
  - Garden /nursery
- Natural Events
  - Spring migration
  - Eagle nesting
- Cattle branding and drives
- Living history museums
- Historical agriculture equipments and methods
- Rodeos
- Traps

## Benefits and Impact of Agritourism in Nebraska

Nebraska's abundant natural resources, old traditions, innovative ideas, wonderful people, and tremendous pride in its rich rural heritage make it a natural choice for agritourism, a merger of the state's top industry, agriculture, with its third largest industry, tourism.

In 2003<sup>1</sup>, Nebraska's primary source of wealth was derived from its estimated \$10.6 billion agricultural industry—an industry that employs 21% of the state's populace in farm, or farm-related jobs. Not to be outdone, in 2004, Nebraska welcomed 19.6 million travelers who spent \$2.9 billion on overnight stays that were at least 100 miles from home.<sup>2</sup> Nebraska's tourism industry also accounted for about 43,200 jobs with \$642.7 million in personal income.<sup>3</sup>

According to the *2004 Promoting Tourism in Rural America*, by the U. S. Department of Agriculture<sup>4</sup>, most dollars generated from outside visitors stay within the local economy. Each dollar spent by tourists in Nebraska is re-spent here, producing an additional \$1.70 in business and income, and creating an overall economic impact of \$2.70<sup>5</sup>. Tax revenue collected from visitors also influences Nebraska communities' quality of life in the form of public facilities, such as swimming pools, libraries, and golf courses built from the proceeds.

Each dollar spent by tourists in Nebraska, creates an economic impact of \$2.70.

*Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism*

Exactly how can tourism help enhance or diversify local economies? To appeal to or satisfy customers, communities must be willing to improve their attractiveness by maintaining buildings, overall infrastructure and cleanliness, and an adequate number of recreational and entertainment outlets, to name a few examples. Every visitor represents a potential investor, business and property owner...even permanent resident. Visitors who like what they see could

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<sup>1</sup> "Nebraska Agriculture Rank and Agribusiness Facts," Nebraska Agricultural Statistics, USDA, April 2005

<sup>2</sup> Department of Economic Development, *Nebraska Travel and Tourism Facts*, <http://info.neded.org/tourfact.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> *Impact of Travel on State Economies*, TIA, 2004 Edition.

<sup>4</sup> *Promoting Tourism in Rural America*, USDA Rural Information Center. [www.nal.usda.gov](http://www.nal.usda.gov).

<sup>5</sup> Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism.

choose to relocate to your community permanently thereby stimulating even more economic growth.

Clearly, Nebraska's rural areas and small towns have a wealth of potential related to history, natural resources, cultural events, and proximity to state parks. Leisure travel topped the list at 82 percent of all domestic travel in 2003.<sup>6</sup> with the top three planned leisure activities being: visiting friends and relatives (75%), going to a beach or lake (70%) and visiting small towns or rural areas (64%)<sup>7</sup>. Attracting more consumers to remote areas may require communities to work together to develop tourism. Similarly, new agritourism businesses would be wise to work together to offer a wide variety of farm products and activities based on unique local attributes.

### ***A New Way of Traveling...What Do Travelers to Rural Areas Like to Do?***

A growing demand for slower-paced farm or ranch experiences is more difficult to satisfy today due to generational gaps among farm and non-farm family members.



Historical and cultural attractions bring visitors from all over the world.

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<sup>6</sup> Domestic Travel Report, 2004 Edition, TIA.

<sup>7</sup> TIA Forecasts Record Breaking Summer Travel Season, May 18, 2005.

Family vacation travel is on the rise. The *Meredith Family Vacation Study*<sup>8</sup>, conducted by TIA, estimates that about 93.2 million adults took family vacations in 2003. Nearly all families included a weekend stay in most of their trips. Four in 10 family vacationers said that at least one trip in 2003 included three generations, and one in six said that at least one trip included grandchildren. Due to today's social circumstances, more grandparents are taking an active role in raising their grandchildren. Grandparents are willing and more able to take the time to introduce their grandchildren to cultural and historical experiences that they personally experienced in their youth.

**What Do Tourists Want?** Quite simply they want something to see, do, and buy.

Traveler's common trip activities (according to the latest travel trends by the TIA) include:

- Shopping
- Attending a social or family event
- Engaging in outdoor activities<sup>9</sup>

Nearly half (48%) of trips that included rural sightseeing also involved shopping. Rural trips include much higher total spending levels, \$557 vs. \$398 on average, excluding spending on transportation<sup>10</sup>. Other activities enjoyed by travelers once they reach their destinations include dining out, going to the beach, lake, or river, visiting historical sites, fishing, hunting, or boating, and attending festivals or fairs<sup>11</sup>.

**Why Do People Vacation?** Understanding what a person is looking for can help you assess the potential opportunities that exist on your property for various agritourism enterprises.

- **To build and strengthen family bonds.** The number one reason for going on vacation is to be together as a family. Families find they have little time to be together. They want to get away from the stresses of

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<sup>8</sup> Tourism Works for America, 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Edition, December 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Domestic Research: Travel Volume and Trends; TIA,

<sup>10</sup> Domestic Travel Report; TIA, 2004 Edition.

<sup>11</sup> Rural Tourism: Small Towns and Villages Appeal to U.S. Travelers. TIA, May 2001.

school and work. They travel to rekindle relationships. Many also seek social time on trips, and view vacations as a time to make new friends.

- **To improve health and wellbeing.** The vast majority of adults say that a vacation is vital to their family's physical and mental wellbeing.
- **To rest and relax.** Getting away from work and worries enables people to refresh and renew—the third most common reason given for taking vacations.
- **To experience an adventure.** Many travelers look for experiences that stir emotions, such as romantic getaways, or excursions that test a person's physical fitness.
- **To escape.** Many people are looking for something different: a change in climate and scenery, a slower pace, cleaner air, quieter surroundings, or anything they perceive as missing or deficient.
- **For knowledge.** People travel to learn or practice a language, study a culture, explore gourmet foods or wines, investigate spirituality, discover something about themselves, or other learning pursuits. They want to learn something unfamiliar.
- **To mark a special occasion.** Some travelers celebrate milestones: new relationships, marriages, birthdays, or professional achievements.
- **To save money or time.** Because financial and time constraints impact vacation decisions more than ever, many travelers are opting for destinations that are closer to home, or shorter vacations.
- **To reminisce.** Some travelers, especially older travelers, may choose farm or hometown visits to rekindle memories from their youth or childhood. Vacationers pay for food, lodging, transportation, and souvenirs, but they really are buying a sentimental journey.<sup>12</sup>

Other factors rated as extremely or very important in the choice of a destination are: safe places to visit (46%), available activities (45%), friends and

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<sup>12</sup> Why People Travel: Agritourism Workbook, Agribusiness Council of Oregon.

family who live there (43%), and/or the attractions (42%)<sup>13</sup>. One-third or more say the following are at least very important in choosing their destination: easy to get around once they arrive (38%); natural or scenic beauty (37%); and/or climate (33%)<sup>14</sup>. Interestingly, getting special deals, promotions, or discounts are least likely mentioned as an extremely or very important factor when choosing leisure destinations<sup>15</sup>.

### ***What Do Tourists Need?***

Tourists most often require accommodations, food and beverages, and information. Nationally, 74 percent drive to their rural destination while one in five includes air transportation.<sup>16</sup> A majority of rural trips include overnight stays at hotels/motels or Bed & Breakfasts, and 41 percent include a stay with friends or relatives<sup>17</sup>.

Knowing your customers' needs is critical to aligning those resources and activities you offer with the kind of people or market you want to attract. This information is equally critical to writing a solid, successful business plan—one you can adapt to the changing needs of your business and customers year in and year out.

One big consideration is how much time to devote to your customers. You may want to start by opening your business for a few days, weekends, or weeks of the year. You don't necessarily need a lot of money or facilities. Your business should compliment your existing resources and facilities. For example, you may want to sell part of your apple crop to a wholesaler and reserve the remaining crop for a 'U-Pick Operation'.

### ***Strength in Numbers***

Before you go any further, find out how your community feels about tourism. This may be the most important step to bringing tourism to your area. Your business is apt to be more successful if the community works with you to support it and other tourism opportunities. By getting more involved and

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<sup>13</sup> *Leisure Travel Planning: How Consumer Make Travel Decisions*; TIA. May 2005.

<sup>14</sup> *Leisure Travel Planning: How Consumer Make Travel Decisions*; TIA. May 2005.

<sup>15</sup> *Leisure Travel Planning: How Consumer Make Travel Decisions*; TIA. May 2005

<sup>16</sup> *Domestic Travel Report*; TIA, 2004 Edition.

<sup>17</sup> *Domestic Travel Report*, TIA, 2004 Edition.



networking in your community, you become more aware of others' jobs in the community, and of programs, services, or support for your potential business. In turn, the community will get to know you, your business goals and objectives. Identifying community resources will be discussed later.

By collaborating with area businesses that offer complementary products and services, you can provide a more quality, stress-free experience for visitors. For example, one approach is to contract with a group of complementary enterprises where all facilities, activities, and services can be purchased as a package deal through a single transaction. Partnering and packaging will be discussed later.



Give tourists an opportunity to experience ranch life such as this cattle drive.

## Section 2

### Do You Have What It Takes To Go Into Agritourism?

Any new small business venture requires careful analysis. It is important to be realistic about your management style, family, assets, and how the addition of any new endeavors integrates into your existing business. Providing a quality experience is the key.

#### ***Evaluation for Getting Started—Is This Business Really for You?***

There are many reasons to start up an agritourism business. Keeping the family on the farm or ranch, and the farm or ranch in the family heads the list. It is satisfying to earn an income from your land and to employ younger family members who want to be part of the operation, or spouses and parents who want employment without having to look elsewhere for jobs. Beyond the strengthened family relationships and financial benefits are new relationships with visitors who make return visits, and pride in providing quality products, services and overall experiences.

The single “make or break” factor emphasized by business experts with years of farm or ranch tourism experience – is “people”. The agritourism experience is all about working with and for people, and meeting their needs. If you are seriously interested in operating an agritourism enterprise, but you are not a “people person”, you’ll need to hire someone who is—family member or outside employee—authorized to coordinate the interactive aspect of the business.

Also critical to any agritourism business is a marketing approach that matches the business’s identity (who you are or want to be) with the customer’s image of the products or service. Customers aren’t only interested in available products or service; they’re interested in the total package—products and service combined with the overall farm or ranch experience, which may include free and fee-based services. The goal should be to uniquely position the items (product + special service + atmosphere) in the minds of the customers. You can’t be all

*“We love people. Our business is a family affair.”*  
Jody Haythorn,  
Haythorn Ranch  
Arthur, NE

things to all people. Therefore, select the market or target group you want to attract and determine what you can offer that will shape their future view of your unique business.

Quality tourism opportunities don't happen by chance. Research shows that a unique product is essential to the success of any agritourism business. City dwellers are willing to pay well for a country experience. Differentiating your product from others will make it more attractive to your customers. With time and creativity, you can expand your recreation enterprise. Fortunately, guests don't need to be entertained every moment. Some guests are simply looking for an escape from their busy routines.

Self-evaluations for the entrepreneur and each family member will help determine why you even are considering starting an agritourism business. These evaluations are particularly helpful for identifying and prioritizing business goals, as well as existing resources and skills of the entrepreneur, family members, and other employees.

Starting any new business is risky from both a financial and personal viewpoint. Before investing money, time, and energy into a new agritourism business, you should complete personal, market, project feasibility, and financial evaluations. These evaluations may reveal the need for technical and managerial assistance that is available from a variety of public sources, including county extension educators, local and regional economic development organizations, small business development centers, the Nebraska departments of agriculture and economic development, banks, tourism agencies, regional tourism groups, state universities, and local community colleges. See Resources for more information.

[See Worksheet Section – Self Evaluation/Family Evaluation](#)

## ***Family Considerations***

### **Examine Your Lifestyle and Family Values<sup>18</sup>**

To select the agribusiness that's right for you, you'll need to examine your lifestyle and that of your family.

Agritourism enterprises clearly require new skills and a different perspective than those involved in producing traditional agricultural products. While one family member's interests may ultimately influence the type of business you start, it's important to consider the requirements of this specific business and how these coincide with all family members' skills and interests. Add to this that living and working with family members can be stressful. Jobs and personal lives are intertwined, involve large time commitments and expectations, and present a unique challenge in terms of finding a balance. You and your family will need to work together to make your agribusiness manageable, profitable and enjoyable.

The new business will require interaction with people—marketing products directly to customers. Some members of the family may need to take courses on production, management, or marketing to grow the business.

Families who openly discuss issues, and agree on an action, or compromise when views are different, promote healthier relationships and a better work environment. When things go well at home, things are more likely to go better at work, especially when the two are closely connected.



You-Pick-It operations can be fun for the whole family.

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<sup>18</sup> Bosch, Kathy, *Our Relationship... and Working Together With Extended Family*, NebFacts, Nebraska Cooperative Extension, NF02-055.

On the flip side, conflict arises when there is miscommunication, or lack of communication. Your work (and home environment) is very much directed by the bonds between people, commitment levels, communications skills, personality and temperament types, and other qualities. For example, your relationship with your father will be different than your sister's relationship with your father. Some people will work well together while others will struggle to get along. Hurt feelings may occur when favoritism is shown, or family members feel excluded or overworked.

### ***Decision-making***

Most business partners want an equal vote or say in what should or shouldn't happen with the business. If you're an integral part of the family and business, then your vote should count equally or in proportion to the financial support vs. work support/manual labor. Weekly or monthly meetings provide an opportunity for families to take care of immediate business and make plans. Meeting guidelines and designated voting members should be established at the beginning. The group also should address concerns or grievances and consider recommendations. Initially, meetings may be difficult, but ultimately these may remove barriers to communication and help resolve differences. However your family chooses to operate the business, fairness needs to be the objective at all times.

### ***Mutual Respect***

All business partners/family members need to be respected, which is difficult when tension or disagreement exists, or when someone is "caught in the middle." For a family business to survive and thrive, respecting all stakeholders is key. "Fight fairly" by tackling problems not people. Treat others the way you want to be treated, and you'll likely respect them despite troublesome or difficult issues.

### ***Income Expectations***

Most business owners are concerned about providing income for themselves and their families. It is natural to expect a return on investments (i.e. time, work, money invested, sacrifices made for the business). Some family

members may be willing to sacrifice their wellbeing for the sake of the business. Individual differences in values or expectations may cause conflict, especially if there is difficulty in "making ends meet."

You need to ask tough questions about income:

- Are you making as much money as you should for your investment?  
(*Realistically it could take three years to see a return on your investment.*)
- Are you getting paid the amount you need to live on?
- Are others in the business getting paid more (or less) than you?
- Are your income expectations realistic for the business?
- Can the business adequately support the family members currently involved?
- Are you willing to sacrifice income for a valued lifestyle?



Outdoor adventure can be another source for added income.



As decisions are made, generation gaps may become more evident. Regarding management practices, one generation may be more cautious or conservative while another may be risk takers. Undeniably, money issues can create or intensify relationship problems. People planning together and talking openly and honestly can avoid problems. Use good judgment and common sense in decision making and in considering your family's needs as well as your own.

### ***Identify Values***

Identifying values is critically important when planning your business collectively with stakeholders, such as family and other community members. Values are those standards, beliefs or qualities that you consider worth upholding or pursuing. Awareness of the different values held by each planning member will make goal setting and conflict resolution easier down the road.

A clear understanding of core values can help expose your personal biases and free you to make more objective business decisions. Remember values are not goals, but something that reflects your view on life, or a judgment about what is important.

Writing down your personal values on the Identify Values worksheet is an important step in the self- evaluation process. After acknowledging your personal values, share them with other planning members. Identify those values common to all members and become attuned to the different values held by each planning member. While two people may have the same values when making a decision, they may ultimately choose different outcomes/results related to how they prioritize. You need to know what values are most important to you in order to set reasonable goals. Ideally, by gaining an understanding of what motivates each member, you'll be able to develop goals that everyone can commit to and support.

[See Worksheet Section– Identify Your Values](#)

## ***Setting Your Goals***

Before family resources and preferences can be determined, goals need to be established. Goals are vital to successful business planning. If the new enterprise doesn't have goals to work toward, it is difficult to know what direction to take or what efforts to focus on. Goals are a way to communicate with all family members and employees involved in the operation. How can they buy into your ideas and management, if they don't know the goals? Studies show people work harder when they are fully informed and involved. People build attachments to what they help develop. This allows all involved in the business, whether as co-owners or employees, to be more committed to their work. In turn, people are more enthusiastic and motivated to complete assigned responsibilities. When they can see the big picture, they can better understand their importance to the operation's success and where they fit into the framework outlined in the plan.

Prioritizing goals also is necessary because an individual may expect more than the new business can deliver. For example, if a set level of supplemental income is the most important goal, the economic feasibility of offering certain products or services may be unreasonable to meet that goal, and the individual would be better off seeking extra income through other means. Goals can always be adjusted or revised later once resources have been examined.

Make sure when filling out the following worksheet that goals reflect your honest interests and values.

[See Worksheet Section - Identify Goals](#)

## ***Start with What You Have***

### **Evaluating Your Resources**

Farms and ranches with their abundant natural and human resources provide great opportunities for agritourism. It's important to evaluate your current resources to better understand how much you use, the benefits and limitations,

and the potential benefits and limitations of a new agribusiness you may be considering. As you identify potential agritourism opportunities for your own farm or ranch, for example, you're likely to see great potential for neighboring farms, ranches or other entities, as well. This first step – a good inventory – will help you complete the next step in *Section 3* the business plan.

### ***Family Resources***

Assess your family resources—those members who will be part of the operation and those who want to work their way into the operation. Identify each individual's strengths in terms of desires and interests.

See Worksheet Section– Family Resources

### ***Community Resources***

As discussed in *Section 1–Understanding Agritourism, Strength in Numbers*, networking with others in the tourism industry provides valuable information and contacts. Develop close relationships with your Chamber of Commerce or Convention Visitors Bureau professionals if you want to establish your business as a travel destination. Other organizations—from clubs to businesses—can provide more information, or complement your products and services.

Partnerships that pool talent and resources often produce more attractive products and services than one business can provide on its own. Partnerships are discussed later in *Section 4*, the marketing section.

See Worksheet Section - Community Resources

### ***Physical Resources***

The places where you interact with your customers—in a field, a store, at the farmers' market, in a parking area, or in your home—are considered your physical resources. The condition of these will cause your guests to form an

*Since the land's resources generate income, conserving those resources makes good business sense.*

immediate and likely, long-lasting impression of your agritourism business.

To avoid starting a business with too few, or overused resources, define your products and service in a way that optimally matches the customer and available physical environment with you and your family skills. This is the point where “a pair of new glasses” and creativity can pay off. What’s ordinary or simple to you may be extraordinary and unique to someone else. In addition, seriously consider how well your products and service will meet the potential guest’s needs and the image you will project.

Physical resources may include anything the customer can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. So, for example, even if your buildings are in good condition, your business may still leave a bad impression with your customer if your employees' clothes are dirty and they don't maintain proper hygiene. Therefore, you must always be aware of your appearance and your employees' appearance.



Nebraska's many rivers make it a canoeing, kayaking, and tubing destination for thousands of travelers.

### ***Location – Physical layout***

Other things to remember when thinking about physical evidence are:

- Remember the number one reason people travel to rural areas is to enjoy the rural scenery. Colorful entryways, walkways, and corridors with lush landscape can further dramatize and beautify the environment.

- One of the first things guests notice is clean facilities. They expect properties to be litter free and kitchen sinks to be spotless. You need to pay close attention to the processes you have in place for keeping your facilities clean and attractive. For example, you may need to assign someone to regularly remove litter, hire housekeepers to clean guest buildings, or locate trash containers far from guest areas. You also need to develop a regular maintenance schedule to ensure that the facilities remain in good working condition.

The number one question that is asked throughout the day is, “Where are the restrooms?” You will need to provide restrooms for guests who spend more than just a few minutes on your farm. In some cases, you may also want to consider portable bathrooms. Many times these accommodations do not need to be fancy as long as they are clean and presentable.

- Most guests will want easy access to your operation so you will need to locate a parking lot near your main guest area. Parking lots may possibly need to be located alongside or behind buildings to preserve your property’s aesthetics. In addition, you will want to consider accessibility for people with disabilities.

### ***Buildings***

Farm and ranch buildings are a part of the landscape that is important to preserve, and appreciated by rural and urban people alike. In alternative enterprise or agritourism businesses, buildings are often used for many purposes.

### ***Livestock and Wildlife***

Livestock and poultry enterprises can supply many forms of entertainment, education and other services to the public. For example, you may consider offering horseback riding, or demonstrating chores from goat milking to sheep shearing.



Birding can be fun for all ages. Blinds like this one protect the wildlife and give people the opportunity to get a closer view.

Wildlife resources include all non-domesticated animals that can be naturally found on farms or ranches, or can be attracted through habitat management. Wildlife may include:

- Big game—deer, antelope, elk
- Small game—furbearers, rabbits, raccoons
- Game birds—turkey, pheasant, quail, ducks, geese
- Game fish—trout, bass, bluegill, catfish
- Non-game—songbirds, raptors, snakes, rodents, frogs, turtles, threatened or endangered species

Some wildlife species need acres, or a designated corridor to provide habitat that's diverse enough to meet their needs. A successful agribusiness can still be built around them. You may want to partner with neighbors and make wildlife habitat development a community project. Some species might spend the entire year on your operation; others might be present for a short time.

Alternative enterprises that focus on species of wildlife are classified as consumptive, non-consumptive, or both. Wildlife resources are managed differently depending on whether animals are to be hunted, or viewed/photographed.

The natural habitat located on your property will determine the kinds of wildlife you attract. Another alternative agritourism enterprise incorporating wildlife could focus on improving or enhancing the existing habitat on your land.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service office can provide technical assistance for creating habitats to attract other wildlife species.



## ***Landscape Features***

Scenic vistas, overlooks, hills, valleys, cliffs, and other natural landscaping that exists on your property should be factored into your choice of most suitable agritourism or alternative enterprise for your farm or ranch. These features, combined with the spaciousness and peaceful surroundings of most rural areas, are ideal for a number of agritourism enterprises. Examples include hiking, horseback riding, nature tours or hayrides. Ecotourism activities focus on natural resources, ecology, geology and astronomy, such as forests, hills, rivers and lakes, plant life, and star gazing, etc.

- **Water**

Water quality and quantity are an important consideration for many alternative and agritourism enterprises. Vegetable and fruit growers rely on abundant irrigation water for crops. Water also has many uses beyond basic agricultural production. Access to ponds, streams, lakes and rivers are vital for sustaining fish and wildlife.

- **Soil Attributes**

Testing a farm's or ranch's soil content can help determine whether a current agribusiness should change the crops or livestock it raises, or whether alternative crops or livestock may be successfully added to existing crop and livestock

Soil quality is vital to crop and livestock production. The quality can be improved by:

- Using soils for which it is best suited.
- Increasing organic matter through crop rotations.
- Conserving topsoil through management practices.
- Maintaining proper nutrient balance.

production. Soil types also determine what farm management and conservation practices are needed to sustain crop production and soil quality throughout your farm or ranch. The local Natural Resources and Conservation Service office in your area is available to help identify soil types, land capability, current use benefits and limitations, and crop and livestock production potentials.

- **Air**

Alternative businesses provide opportunities to improve air quality and complement agritourism enterprises by enhancing or maintaining clear, open skies for the public to enjoy. Natural resource conservation programs

are available to help landowners improve air quality. Air quality enterprises may complement other alternative enterprises or agritourism. Woodland and grassland sequester carbon dioxide, which improves global air quality. Tree groves can protect livestock and crops, save moisture, or enhance picnic and meeting areas and add aesthetic value to the landscape. Good air quality is especially appreciated by city dwellers.

### ***Financial Resources***

While poor management is cited most frequently as the reason that businesses fail, inadequate or ill-timed financing is a close second. It isn't enough to have sufficient financing; knowledge and planning also are required to help avoid common mistakes, such as securing the wrong type of financing, miscalculating the needed amount, or underestimating the cost to borrow money. Before inquiring about financing, ask yourself:

- Do I need more capital, or can I manage existing cash flow more effectively?
- How do I define my need?
- How urgent is my need? The best terms are obtained when needs are first anticipated and financing isn't secured under pressure.
- How great are my risks? All businesses carry risks, and the degree of risk will affect cost and available financing alternatives.
- For what purposes will the capital be used? Any lender will require that capital be identified for very specific needs.
- Is my business seasonal or cyclical? Seasonal needs for financing generally are short term. Loans advanced for cyclical industries are designed to support a business through depressed periods.
- Have I factored in my management team? Management is the most important element assessed by money sources.

Conventional financing (i.e., banks) is not the only available resource. Depending on the agribusiness option you choose, you may have an opportunity to apply for new business loans or grants through various government resources.

Several informational contacts include Nebraska Business Development Centers, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development. These and other offices can be contacted for more information (see Resource section). You also may want to refer to Nebraska Cooperative Extension (NF96-278) NebFacts, *Setting Up Your Own Business: Financing Your Business*, (<http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/consumered/nf278.htm>).

### ***Resource Mapping***

Published maps or aerial photos will help you complete the “Resource map” worksheet. Maps can be acquired from your local USDA Farm Service Agency. You may need to draw a map to scale showing the size and configuration of important physical features on your farm, including fields used for crop production, pastures, ponds, and rivers. The map also should include manmade features, such the homestead, fence lines, silos, corrals, windmills, and barns. It also would be useful to identify perennial crops, such as alfalfa, vineyards and orchards. A similar map should show the land you lease or have access to, and the proximity of these areas to the main attraction area. This map will help you visually identify and inventory your resources and communicate with others about them.

When mapping your resources, ask yourself:

- What are my resources and those resources around me?
- What do I offer that’s unique or different from others?
- What type of experience can I provide?
- What natural/environmental and physical resources on my land will entice people to stop and visit?
- What type of tourists currently visit my area?

- What services and facilities are available?
- Are these services and facilities adequate for visitors?
- Do I have adequate space for properly storing and maintaining equipment?
- How far is my operation from the nearest community?

Completing the inventory will help you see the availability of complementary resources and their potential multiple uses.

See Worksheet Section – Physical Resource Map & Written List of Resources and Climate

### ***Begin With the End in Mind. What Do You Want to Do?***

You and each family member should compile separate and joint lists of appealing ventures, keeping in mind management styles, values, goals, and family, community and natural resources.

Now you and your team can develop insights into how your resources might be used to both attract visitors and benefit your community. An initial inventory should use maps designating key resources. Review resource locations to determine potential tourism routes and sensitive areas to be protected. Discuss how these resources may be logically connected. What are some themes you might develop? How might the routes be promoted? Picture the whole network of interacting pieces that form your tourism profile, and possibly, your tourism potential.

Think about the ideas you have “right now” for potential agritourism enterprises. Brainstorm. No idea is too outrageous at this stage. Be sure to write down all suggestions and possibilities. BE CREATIVE! These are just ideas and you will continue to build from here.

See Worksheet Section - Field of Dreams & Ideas of Potential Enterprises

## **Take Aim**

The family's values, goals and resources are the start of turning dreams into reality. The next step is to **Take Aim**. With an open mind, examine all benefits and problems related to each suggestion. Consider and discuss the following:

- What goals are most important to me and my family?
- Do these goals fit with my values and my family's values?
- Are the goals realistic?
- How will the new enterprise benefit my existing operation and my family?
- What can each family member contribute?
- What do we need to do to achieve this dream?
- What goals are most important to me and my family?
- What are the objectives needed to make this dream come true?
- What target date should we assign for each goal?
- How long will it take to reach each goal?
- Can we accomplish this process in stages?
- Would achieving our dream in stages hinder the family? How so?
- What makes this business concept more unique and better than comparable businesses?
- How can I nurture the business?

Starting with your existing resources, careful consideration should be given to whether it is necessary to build additional facilities for your new enterprise. After all, you don't want to overburden your fledgling operation with large capital expenditures. Since a new agritourism business cannot be counted to generate immediate substantial income, paying off any large capital expenses will take considerable time. Adapting current resources will make your new business more economically feasible.

By now, you and your family should have a good idea of the top two or three potential agritourism businesses that best fit your resources. Now you're ready to write your plan.

## **Section 3**

### **Before You Plow-PLAN**

It's extremely easy to start a business...fill out some forms and you're set. Starting a new business that generates profit, however, is very difficult, and you will want help making decisions that lead to operating a fulfilling and profitable business.

#### ***What is a Business Plan?***

The business plan outlines the key functional areas of your business, including operations, management, finance, and marketing—a standard fixture in today's business environment and an essential component to any successful business. Anyone who has a financial interest in, or is exposed to financial risk through your enterprise will want to review your business plan. Conversely, if you invested your resources and/or capital with another business, you'd certainly want to review their business plan.

Business plans vary in detail depending on the scope of the business and the purpose for which the plan is prepared. For example, a non-traditional business trying to obtain venture capital will have a much more detailed plan than a more conventional business trying to obtain a bank loan.

#### ***Why Prepare a Business Plan?***

Business plans can be used to guide and direct management, as well as attract investors, obtain financing from creditors, and recruit quality partners or employees. Business plans provide the entrepreneur with a means of evaluating the feasibility of a proposed venture, and may uncover previously unexplored opportunities or limitations. While no one wants to think that things could go wrong with your new venture, a good business plan will include contingencies for such a scenario. Business planning focuses on reality and removes emotion from the decision making process.

## ***Who Should Prepare the Plan?***

Should those directly involved in starting up the business write the plan, or should they hire someone to write it? Actually, neither is wrong. Ultimately the decision depends on time and money. But while a consultant may write it, you, as the business owner, will need to implement the plan. At the very least, key family members and employees should be invited to share input in the plan.

## ***Where To Get Information About Developing a Business Plan?***

Business classes or workshops sponsored by the Cooperative Extension Service, Small Business Development Centers, NebraskaEDGE (a University of Nebraska Extension program), or local business organizations provide excellent information, including a basic framework for the plan. The Nebraska Department of Economic Development has a *Business Toolkit* that lists many helpful resources (<http://assist.neded.org/>). Perhaps the largest single source of data available today is found on the Internet. There also are many available software programs and books for creating business plans. Combining information from these sources with individual creativity will make for a better plan.

## ***Getting Started***

Because there are many different approaches to developing a business plan, the following information will help you begin writing and tailoring a plan to fit your own needs.

A business plan should be written in third person point-of-view. The length will vary, but most plans fall between 10 and 50 pages, excluding appendices. The following components are suggested only as a guide. The order and emphasis placed on each area will vary depending on the type of agribusiness.

### **Cover**

The cover should indicate the name of the business, contact information, such as names of key people (principals), addresses, phone numbers, or e-mail

addresses, and perhaps most importantly, the date because revisions are almost always necessary.

### **Executive Summary**

The executive summary is a concise “Readers Digest” overview of the plan’s key aspects, including the operation’s status, goals and objectives, products and services, marketing strategy, and financial projections. It should highlight the key elements for success, such as break-even, sales, or market share. The executive summary gives an interested party a quick overview of the plan. The executive summary should clearly state the intentions of the business and the opportunities that exist for its products or services.

### **Table of Contents**

A table of contents helps the reader quickly refer to individual sections of the business plan. The table of contents should include all headings and subheadings featured within the body of the text.

### **History and General Information**

The history of the existing operation describes how long the farm or ranch has been in operation, a basic overview of the farm or ranch operations, the experiences and qualifications of the owners, and reasons for starting or adding the new agritourism enterprise.

### **Mission or Vision Statement**

A mission or vision statement should be general enough to be flexible, but rigid enough to give the business a strategic direction. The mission statement should be known and recognized by everyone involved in the business. It should be less than 50 words and contain a reference to the business's purpose, the customer, and the financial objective. Like the entire business plan, development of the mission statement should include input from all key family members and employees.

### **Goals and Objectives**

While the mission statement is broad and general, goals and objectives are quantifiable, specific and should be divided into short and long-term. Goals and objectives may be related to sales, profits, efficiency, or involve expansion or



bringing another partner into the business. Goals and objectives also should be realistic and obtainable. Reviewing goals previously identified in the first chapter may be helpful.

### **Market Research**

Market research is the backbone for most business plans. It is critical to outline those customer needs being met by the business, why the business's products and services are unique, and what target market (group of potential customers with similar characteristics) will be attracted. It's important to state the reasons behind selecting a particular target market. The size of the market, emerging trends, and anticipated market share should be analyzed.

### **Marketing Plan**

The marketing plan is a strategy for accomplishing sales goals in light of conditions uncovered in the market analysis. A marketing plan includes decisions regarding pricing, distribution, promotion, and location. Each section should describe the different strategies you'll use in attracting customers, as well as the costs involved with each marketing activity. A back-up marketing plan is essential in case the original plan fails.

### **Operations**

Perhaps the most overlooked aspect of a business plan is operations, which addresses issues related to location, facilities, business hours, and in some cases seasons, material needs, suppliers, and staffing. The capacity of facilities to meet expansion needs, the availability of competent employees, and how quality will be measured and maintained are also discussed.

### **Organization and Management**

The business plan should explain how the business is organized. The duties and responsibilities of key management personnel should be outlined and be accompanied by an organizational chart indicating where the decision-making power rests. People reading the plan will want to know the qualifications of key personnel that make them qualified for certain positions within the business. It is recommended to include the résumés of these individuals. If a certain area (marketing, sales, finance, etc.) lacks management expertise, the plan should

state this and provide ways to compensate for the problem. If professional consultants, such as lawyers or accountants are to be used, this section should explain their roles. Organizations that can offer you guidance include your local Chamber of Commerce, or NebraskaEDGE (see Resource section).

### **Financial Plan**

The financial plan determines whether the marketing and operational plans are feasible. This plan should include financial projections (including revenues and expenses), initial financial requirements, and historical statements. Investors will want to know:

- How much money is needed?
- What are your potential sources?
- How long will you need the money?
- What rate of return can be expected?
- What are the risks?

You'll need to include a balance sheet, depreciation schedule, sales and costs of goods or services sold schedule(s), loan amortization schedule, income statement, cash flow statement, balance sheet and breakeven analysis. *Keys For Successful Business Start-up, A Guide to Starting a Business in Nebraska* ([www.nbdc.unomaha.edu](http://www.nbdc.unomaha.edu)) offers information and examples of how to complete these financial items. More information can be found using Nebraska's Cooperative Extension Neb Facts (NF96-278) *Setting Up Your Own Business: Financing Your Business* available at: <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/consumered/nf278.htm>.

Remember to list your reasonable assumptions as you prepare your financial statements. You'll need to tell the lender what assumptions you have based your financial statements on to justify the end-results of your projections. It's important to only use reasonable assumptions to make your business venture as realistic as possible. Assumptions include the number of employees, wages,

sales, cost of goods or services sold, operating expenses, loan terms, assets contributed and/or purchased, owner's equity, etc.

See Worksheet Section - Financial Plan

### ***Common Pitfalls in Business Planning***

- **Too much detail**–Minute or trivial items that dilute or mask the critical aspects of the plan should be avoided.
- **Graphics without substance**–Graphics can complement, but not substitute for, logic and reasoning.
- **No executive summary**–Many readers of business plans will not read past the executive summary; if it doesn't exist, they may not read the plan at all.
- **Inability to communicate the plan**–The business plan should clearly outline the proposal in understandable terms.
- **Failing to anticipate problems**–A good business plan will recognize potential roadblocks that could arise in implementing the plan and provide contingency plans to overcome them.
- **Lack of involvement**–The business plan should be a team effort and involve management, as well as spouses, children, staff, and any other stakeholders.
- **Focusing on production estimates** –When making projections, the focus needs to be on sales, not production estimates. Production is irrelevant if there are no buyers.
- **Unrealistic financial projections**–Unrealistic financial projections will cause a plan to lose credibility in the eyes of investors.
- **Lack of commitment**–Commitment is exhibited by timeliness and following up on all appointments. Investment of personal money is looked upon favorably because it shows the owner is willing to make a financial commitment.

## ***Contingency Plans***

If there are indications that financial and marketing goals are not being met, changes may be necessary. These may be as simple as changing times of operation, switching marketing methods, or providing family members and employees with additional training. These alterations also may result in the need to change your goals and objectives.

One contingency plan no one likes to talk about is shutting down. While no business owners want to contemplate failure, they need to understand the term “sunk costs”. Sunk costs refer to money invested in a business that cannot be recovered. After careful evaluations indicate that failure is eminent and no other contingencies are available, shutting down may be the best and cheapest option in the long run.

## ***Presenting the Plan***

Apart from investors, community members, organizations, neighbors, and other interested parties may want to hear about your business plan. The culmination of a well-prepared business plan is its presentation. Factors influencing the way you arrange your material include the amount of time allocated for the presentation, the complexity of the plan, and whether the audience has had an opportunity to review it ahead of time. A formal presentation shouldn't be made until an impartial party has reviewed and commented on the plan. Another set of eyes can often find critical flaws, thereby preventing potential miscommunication or embarrassment. Technical expertise and presentation skills also are not always traits that are packaged together. If there is to be more than one presenter, you should carefully assess which individual is best qualified to present each part of the plan.

The plan should be presented from the listener's, not entrepreneur's, point of view. Visuals can effectively communicate the plan, especially when it comes

to technical information. However, visuals shouldn't distract from the presentation's content. They should be clear, type should be large, and only one idea communicated per each visual. Presenters should be prepared to answer questions related to:

- Owner's ability to implement
- Priority of objectives
  - Adequacy and validity of market research
  - Financial projections
  - Keys to success
  - Alternatives if Plan "A" fails

## **Section 4**

### **Marketing Your Business**

For many farm and ranch operators, marketing is the most difficult part of starting the new business. Landowners understand their resources better than how to sell these resource experiences. Even the best-managed agritourism business can be unsuccessful if people are unaware of it. Business plans should contain a section on marketing that defines the products and services (including price), identifies the customer, and lays out how to market to potential clients.

#### ***What is Marketing? Why is it Important?***

Marketing defines the customer's desires and needs, and gears businesses toward meeting these expectations by offering a satisfying experience. The terms "marketing", "advertising", "promotion", and "publicity" are often used interchangeably, but there are important differences:

***Marketing*** is the combination of product design, price, advertising, and promotion used to sell a product and fulfill a business mission. This includes marketing directly to customers, suppliers, and potential market partners.

***Advertising*** is money spent to promote a product or activity through TV, magazines, newspapers, billboards, and the Internet.

***Promotion*** includes activities, such as special contests, coupons, or trade show displays used to demonstrate products and services to the general public or special groups.

***Publicity*** falls into the editorial category of media. Publicity is free, but also inherently more interesting and credible than space or time you may pay for through advertising.

Advertising, promotion, and publicity are three distinctly different communication strategies frequently combined to increase customer traffic and sales. The goal of each is to influence the purchasing decisions of consumers. Remember advertising, promotion, and publicity alone cannot generate significant demand for a product if consumers don't like the product, or if it doesn't meet a specific need. It is marketing's responsibility to identify the most likely customers, design the best product or service offering, set the product's or service's price range, and choose the overall advertising message and presentation content most likely to entice customers to buy. There are four basic reasons for developing a marketing plan:

- It looks at your business as a whole and ties together market objectives.
- It forces you to identify your target audience.
- It forces you to think about both short- and long-term marketing strategies.
- It provides a guide to measure progress and outcome.

Marketing consists of strategies for identifying your customers, determining what they need and what to charge for those products and services that satisfy their needs, communicating that you have what they want, and finally,

<b>PRODUCT</b>	-Entertainment being offered <i>Features, optional services, packaging, style</i>
<b>PLACE</b>	-Site where activities take place Frequency, distributors, inventory
<b>PROMOTION</b>	-Means to reach potential clients Publicity, advertising, mailing list
<b>PRICE</b>	Discounts, credit terms, list price
<b>PEOPLE</b>	Staff, customers, community, partners

effectively selling them your products or services. That makes up the marketing mix or what is traditionally known as the "4 P's" in marketing: product, place, promotion and price. A fundamental

element in agritourism that shouldn't be forgotten is "people". Adding the "people" factor makes it the "5 P's" in marketing. Use the list below as a mental tool when composing your marketing plan.

See Worksheet Section – Development of the "5P's"

### **Product Design**

An agritourism enterprise may take several years to reach full potential. Developing and marketing products and services also take time. Markets may be extremely narrow and ingenuity/creativity is regularly required to develop the enterprise and remain competitive. To "sell" your operation you need to:

- Identify the customer or target market.
- Make the experience UNIQUE.
- Make guests aware of your product or services.
- Motivate guests to participate in and pay for services or products.
- Interpret, through feedback how to improve the experience for guests.
- Identify advantages/disadvantages you have with others.

Based on your personal and family values, goals, and resources (discussed in *Field of Dreams and Ideas of Potential Enterprises* worksheet) you probably have a good grasp of what products or services you want to offer. Remember, it's not only the accommodations, meals, or guide service you offer, you're satisfying needs and desire for education, socialization and relaxation. It's necessary to define what your customers, from their point of view, are buying.

### **Name Your Price**

At the foundation of marketing is the need to give consumers what they want for a mutually agreed upon price. Although many people involved in agritourism focus on their commodities or activities, or the activity participated in, the real issue is fulfilling the motives of travelers. Market research shows that price doesn't head a customer's list of considerations. First, customers evaluate the available products and services, the perceived quality of the opportunity, and their desire for it...then they ask the price. Such a concept is foreign to most agricultural producers who

The most critical bottom line factor in marketing is PRICING



routinely study wholesale prices and futures markets. An old marketing adage implies people buy benefits not products – “we buy the sizzle not the steak”. The benefits that tourists reap from their visits to agritourism businesses are many. What’s most important is the value of the experience. A family going to a fall pumpkin patch is likely to buy a jack-o-lantern or gourd, but what they really purchased was a family experience. And the true value of that experience may far exceed the cost of pumpkins. With that said, pricing is the most critical factor in marketing. Nebraskans shouldn’t undersell their products, but recognize the value and capitalize on it.

Price also is the major element in determining a business’s profit level. Competition can set a ceiling on the prices that the market will bear for any product. The more intense the competition, the more difficult it will be to charge a premium price.

The price you charge for your products and/or services are influenced by production costs (yours and your competitors) and by your customer’s willingness to pay, plus your profit margin. This is referred to as Cost-Based Pricing.

**Price = (Direct Costs + Overhead Costs + Profit Margin)**

Another method, Going-Rate Pricing, involves basing your pricing on the competition. The most effective method, however, is Cost-Based Pricing where you compare the competition’s products, services and prices before setting your final prices. Keep in mind that some people are willing to pay extra for special products and services. Take into account:

- Typical price
- Price relative to competitor
- Your power to set prices
- Demand sensitivity to price changes
- Promotions
- Changing market conditions when determining price

To most effectively reach guests, marketing plans must be constantly adjusted and updated. Consider, too, that sometimes businesses attract

unexpected customers, making it essential to maintain a flexible marketing plan. Continually evaluate your success and collect information from guests to make the best decisions for your enterprise.

See Worksheet Section - Product and Price

### ***Who is My Customer?***

You need to know whom you're trying to reach to effectively market to them. Most consumer groups can be identified through research and relying on common sense. For example, promoting beef steak to the Vegetarians Association is a waste of time and funds. The obvious targets include traditional consumers. Often overlooked are neighbors, nearby communities, international consumers, and producers and manufacturers who sell products complementary to yours. For example, if you have a bed and breakfast, you may be looking for outdoor recreation for your guests, such as hunting or bird watching. Understanding your typical customer (market) can help you successfully build your business. A "shotgun" approach to attracting the attention of anyone and everyone is seldom effective without an expensive advertising campaign. Thorough knowledge of your market can help you select new products and develop your current or new plan. Gathering basic information about potential customers is as easy as conducting a formal survey or simply asking questions. The most common method for learning about your market is to survey customers. Becoming more familiar about your customer and addressing their needs will allow you to more effectively provide goods and services they will purchase. When you start out, it may be difficult to come up with information about potential clients. One helpful exercise is to describe your customer.

Value is added and income potential increased by offering better services, not producing more bushels.

"The hardest question, individually and collectively, to answer is who to market to."  
Curt Arens  
Bow View Farms  
Crofton, NE

See Worksheet Section– Who is My Customer?



Gather your friends and family to enjoy tanking down Nebraska's rivers.

A market perspective determines what the tourist wants. Identifying a market perspective considers what different groups of people (the target market) want in a tourism experience. Target markets or audiences are distinct groups or segments of clients you expect to reach when you employ different marketing strategies. If you currently have people entering your property without paying (hunters, anglers, wildlife viewers, etc.), you may want to conduct a survey of their interests and ability to pay for services. Important items to keep in mind are demographics (age, sex, and/or income), point of origin and features of previous destinations, activities and interests, spending patterns, and season of travel.

Ask yourself the following questions to help determine the target audience:

1. Who's the most typical customer I see coming through the door? (Be specific: married vs. single, families, age range, distance traveled, income range, profession, etc.)
2. What additional services are required?
3. When do they use such services or products?
4. Why will they become a customer?
5. What do I need to do to keep this customer coming back? Use descriptive words for your clients (adventuresome, relaxed, etc.).
6. How can I best communicate with them?

To find this information you may need to evaluate comparable operations run by competitors. Studying your competitor will help you determine how many

similar products and services already exist in the marketplace, their strengths and weaknesses, and the various market segments (guests) currently being served by each competitor. This information may help you identify a niche where you can gain a foothold by outdoing your competition in serving a particular market demand. In other words, you should look for a void in the marketplace to help distinguish your enterprise from others. Each market segment may have a different need or desire and require a different form of marketing. Your marketing plan should address the needs of each target market and change as their needs change. You can learn about the competition by visiting their businesses, using their products or services, or possibly interviewing them directly. Some competitors may refuse to share information, while others may be quite helpful. They may have suggestions to decrease direct competition, and again, you may find ways to complement and partner with one another.

### ***Market Research***

Market research can provide information that makes your future projections more accurate and helps you develop a successful marketing strategy. Like any other information gathering process, it's a matter of asking the right questions.

In many cases, marketing research is limited only by your ability to put in the necessary time and effort. Much of it you can do yourself at very little cost. The key to marketing research is that it be targeted and cost-effective. Information needs to be timely, comprehensive and accessible.

There are two types of market research—**primary** and **secondary**. Primary is going out and gathering information, such as counting cars, and surveying or observing people. Secondary research is studying collected and published data.

The process used to distribute surveys is critical in determining how to interpret the results. Test your survey on friends and family. You'll be surprised how often questions are misunderstood. A simple test will lead to great improvements in a survey's usefulness.

The test market is effective when your product is new and unfamiliar to most customers. Let your potential customers, friends or family members sample your products and/or services, and request feedback to gauge the potential of the product or service at various price levels.

### ***Partnership and Packaging***

It's almost impossible for a single small business to effectively provide all essential elements. One approach is to reach an agreement with a group of complementary enterprises. Offer a package featuring all facilities and services covered by a single price, which can be purchased in a single transaction. For example, a farm offering horseback nature tours may enter into an agreement with a local lodge or hotel to provide accommodations, or consider adding festivals, cowboy poetry and related cultural events. People find packaged vacation options appealing.

By seeking out and collaborating with other businesses offering complementary products and services, you can effectively offer a quality experience for visitors. It's beneficial to formally incorporate your service network into an Agritourism Association, which provides a great opportunity for sharing ideas, ensuring quality, and offering training to improve agritourism businesses. Such associations also can represent your industry and work collectively on issues, such as lowering costs of insurance and marketing.

### ***The Importance of Public Relations and Personal Selling***

Part marketing and part advertising, a public relations campaign goes further to create and maintain a favorable image. As an entrepreneur, you should always be concerned with your business image. Your public relation goals can range from clients' satisfaction with their experience, to acceptance of your operation by neighbors, local community leaders, and the public. It's worth the effort to garner support from neighbors, state and federal agencies, local sheriff and law enforcement personnel, citizen groups and your local Chamber of Commerce and Convention Visitors Bureau.

Public relations helps you gain credibility and visibility in your market at little or no cost because instead of purchasing advertising time or space, you submit newsworthy information to editors, reporters and directors who may publish or broadcast the information. Public relations conditions markets to be receptive to your business's advertising and staff. It develops relationships, reputation and image. Publicity plays an important role in building the public awareness and perceptions of your business as a legitimate and reliable source of goods and services. As mentioned before, while publicity is free and often more credible than advertising, it may come at a price if your business isn't meeting certain expectations.

## Tips for Building Marketing and Community Partnerships

**Establishing relationships and cooperative alliances with your community is a key element to long-term success.**

1. Build on agricultural, recreational, entertainment, educational, historic and other resource based assets in the area while being stewards of the land.
2. Send news releases to local media to inform them of environmental events and human-interest stories. (i.e., migration of the Sandhills cranes or catch of a record-breaking fish).
3. Speak about your project early with neighbors, family, and local businesses. Share your ideas. Listen to their concerns and feedback. Address any problems early in the development of the project.
4. Speak about your project at service clubs, association meetings, and other gatherings. Get feedback and modify your presentation. Join the local Chamber of Commerce, tourism and zoning boards, and Convention and Visitors Bureaus. Stay informed about current trends and statewide issues.
5. Work to foster a sense of community and personal responsibility among citizens.
6. Work with other businesses to encourage small town character and support of locally owned businesses.
7. Define who shares potential customers with you. Align yourself with other businesses and attractions and openly discuss potential customers. Develop exchange promotions and track the source of your leads.
8. See your shortcomings or weaknesses as future partnerships. Inventory your community and seek out those who have what you need to complete your goals. Return the favor.
9. Manage your operation's physical growth to ensure quality of life for all affected citizens.
10. Use the Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism ([www.visitnebraska.org](http://www.visitnebraska.org)), Department of Agriculture ([www.agr.state.ne.us](http://www.agr.state.ne.us)), and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission ([www.ngpc.state.ne.us](http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us)) to research existing tourism opportunities in your area.
11. Be innovative. The greatest achievements happen outside the "system."  
Stay creative!

## ***Promotion***

Few products on the market appeal to everyone. Your financial success depends on your appeal to enough customers to cover your expenses and produce a reasonable profit. Establishing your business requires a certain amount of personal selling. If the public doesn't know about your agribusiness, there will be little demand for it.

When developing your advertising, you should follow the AIDA formula:

- First, catch their **Attention**
- Second, get their **Interest**
- Third, create a **Desire**
- Fourth, get them to **Act**

There are many mediums through which to advertise—television, Internet, radio, magazines, newspapers, billboards, and direct mail. Advertising is costly, so it's important you select the most appropriate venue. Your choice will depend on many factors including the amount of money available, the message, market and market area. You may want to request information about media sources, technical assistance, and potential cooperative advertising opportunities. Contact your local tourism organizations, Chambers of Commerce, state tourism offices and other promotional organizations for more help.

## ***Business Image***

Similarly, you must always pay attention to detail when providing any sort of printed materials for your guests to read. While a typographical error on a promotional brochure may not seem like a big deal, the customer who notices the error may wrongly conclude that you are unintelligent or sloppy. By providing attractive brochures that use correct spelling and grammar, you can go a long way toward producing a positive image of your business. To fulfill a good business image pay attention to detail in each of the following:

- Company Name
- Logo



- Facility Appearance
- Business Cards, Stationery, Envelopes and Forms
- Employee Appearance
- Equipment Appearance
- Tag Line
- Brochures
- Website

Choosing a name is an extremely important marketing decision. Catchy names may seem clever, but often reveal nothing about the business's products or services. The business name is a primary marketing tool and should contain a clear message about the product or service provided. The Internet has changed many rules regarding business names. If you plan on having a website, consider how important it is to have a business name that also is your domain name. Potential names can easily be found by entering the name into search engines. While it's best to find a name that works equally well on the Internet and in the conventional world, it's easier said than done. Trademarks and logos also are marketing tools and serve as cues or reminders to customers. Develop a simple and effective image that can be easily recognized. (i.e., cattle brand) and conveys the desired message. Distinguish yourself from others and let your customers know it.

## ***Advertising***

When beginning your business, plan to spend 10-25 percent of total sales on marketing. Established operations typically spend 4-10 percent. Being creative is beneficial, but seeking help may be necessary. Many resources are free or available for a nominal fee, or you may decide to hire a professional.

Advertising relies on purchased print, audio, visual and electronic communications to deliver information about a product, service, or business to potential and existing customers. In terms of content and where the message is going to be aired or printed, it's important that your advertising campaign is

directed at your target market. When advertising your business to the target market:

- Inform guests of your agritourism business' existence;
- Inform guests why they should visit your farm (i.e., learn about agriculture);
- Remind guests of a specific reason why they might want to visit your farm (need a pumpkin for Halloween, etc.);
- Associate specific qualities with your enterprise (good, clean, family fun, etc.); and
- Differentiate your operation from the competition (hayrack ride and pumpkin included in the admission price, etc.).

### ***Mass Media Advertising***

At least two months before the entertainment farming operation opens, you should get advertising costs and scheduling information from your local newspaper(s), radio station(s), and television station(s). In addition, you should start preparing your advertisement(s). Mass media advertising should be directed at the local market. Newspaper, television and radio advertising is particularly useful when starting a new entertainment or agritourism business. By advertising, you're able to reach a large number of potential consumers. The advertisement can be used to get potential consumers' attention and alert them to your business opening and any special events taking place. It also is a good idea to periodically advertise and remind existing and potential visitors that you exist. Before you decide to advertise in any medium, make sure the subscriber or listener demographics of the newspaper(s), television station(s) and/or radio station(s) are similar to the demographics of your target market (customer).

### ***Word-of-Mouth Advertising***

Word-of-mouth advertising can be an effective way to attract customers, so long as your agritourism business offers reliable, positive, quality products, services and experiences. Typically, people are more likely to complain about an

experience than compliment it. As a result, if customers are less than satisfied with quality, price, and service or any other aspect of the operation, they may actually hurt business by generating negative word-of-mouth advertising. On the other hand, if customers are satisfied, they will likely recommend your business to family and friends. Satisfied customers are significantly more likely than unsatisfied customers to make repeat visits. A simple formula to remember is 20 percent of customers account for 80 percent of your business, so generating loyal repeat customers is a critical success factor.

### ***Direct Marketing*** ***Create a Brochure that “Sells”***

Perhaps the most useful marketing piece is a brochure. Brochures come in all shapes and sizes, and there are important elements you need to consider:

- **The top 1/4-1/3 front portion of the brochure must capture the reader.** This is often the only part that shows in a brochure rack, so it must be exciting.
- **How do customers describe you?** Use testimonials. Show how UNIQUE your business is. Make an emotional connection. Use text and photos that include people enjoying what you’re selling.
- **Tell highlights and specifics** such as price, times, locations etc. How much detail is required? Remember the brochure is meant to get them to call, visit and buy.
- **Use design to strengthen your message.** Use fresh, updated photography that tells a story. Choose a distinctive, easy-to-read typeface for your background color/image. Make sure the size fits the rack.
- **Use maps.** Where are you located? Reference landmarks.
- **Where do they get more information?** List your phone, fax, email, website, mailing address and a contact person if applicable.
- **Create the complete package.** Make it easy to say “yes”. Consider guest needs and services.

- **Text and photos should “sell” the experience.** Sell the enjoyment of riding in a canoe, not the price; sell the enjoyment of your wagon ride and dining experience, not just eating a meal.
- **Translate your materials.** If targeting international visitors, consider translating material into more commonly spoken languages (German, Japanese, Spanish, French) or the native language of your most common visitors. Even though guests may know English, they may feel more comfortable seeing the information in their native language and appreciate your efforts. Be sure to find a qualified translator; don't depend on a straight translation due to word uses and meanings. Find someone with an agricultural background or who is studying agriculture. Keep in mind some languages vary by region, dialect, and traditional vs. simplified.

### ***Road Sign Advertising***

Another effective method of advertising is signage. Road signs can provide potential customers with a variety of information about the agritourism business. Information on your sign could include some of the following:

- Name
- Telephone Number
- Location
- Business Hours
- Website

In addition to containing information, your sign should use high contrast and large letters in combination with bright, easy-to-read colors (e.g., yellow writing on a navy blue background) to attract motorists' attention.

Agribusinesses whose primary source of income is dependent on seasonal motorists and tourism expenditures should look into possible signage funding from the Tourist Oriented Directional Signing (TODS) program, a service of the Nebraska Department of Roads. TODS helps provide directional signage to unique commercial and nonprofit recreational, historical, cultural, educational,

and entertainment-related services and activities. To qualify, the activity must derive its major income or number of visitors (those not residing in the immediate area of the business/activity) during the normal business season. The tourist-oriented activity must be open to the public during its normal season at least eight hours per day, five days per week. The business week must include a Saturday or Sunday. TODS will be placed on the right-of-way of rural highways. Signing will be owned and maintained by a contracted agent of the Nebraska Department of Roads.



Entryway appeal can make all the difference when attracting tourist.

Before erecting a sign, you must investigate local and state regulations concerning road signage. An informational guide, *So You Want a Sign—A Guide to Highway Signs*, by the Nebraska departments of Roads and Economic Development can explain the types of signs available for placement. The guide also can be accessed at [www.dor.state.ne.us/info/docs/hwysign.pdf](http://www.dor.state.ne.us/info/docs/hwysign.pdf). Or contact: the Nebraska Department of Roads (See Resource Section).

## ***Virtual Marketing (Websites and the Internet)***

Why develop a website? As of July 2004, more than half of American adults age 18 or older (56%) claimed they currently use the Internet<sup>19</sup>. For travel planning, nearly half of today's travelers use the Internet, while three in 10 use it to make travel reservations according to TIA<sup>20</sup>. Because tourism is an industry based on imagery, the Internet is a very effective tool.

"The Internet is our greatest information and marketing tool."  
Doug Russell  
Broken Arrow Wilderness

Proper image management can help identify a destination's advantages and entice visitors to come experience it.

A website is a powerful and effective marketing tool for advertising your business and sharing information. It provides colorful interactive presentations and material, describing products and/or services that can be accessed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is a cost effective form of advertising.

The four main items to include in website development are:

- **Domain Name**—Create and register the name of your website (for example, www.agtourism.com).
- **Site Map**—Shows users how to navigate the site.
- **Design**—Color schemes, fonts, how pages are displayed, audio and video files, etc.
- **Content**—Information that users can access. Brief descriptions about history, owners, contact information, directions, rates, hours, etc.

Additional items to consider:

- **Logo**—Your company logo should be displayed on every page.
- **Links** —Connects with partners or other attractions in the area to provide customers with additional sources for vacation planning, shopping, activities, etc.
- **What's New Page**—Could include upcoming events or recent activities.
- **In the News**—Includes all public relations highlighting your operation (news articles, photos, video clips, etc.)

<sup>19</sup> Travel Industry Association, *Travelers' Use of the Internet*, 2004 Edition.

<sup>20</sup> Travel Industry Association, *Travelers' Use of the Internet*, 2004 Edition.

- **FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)**–Posting the most frequently asked questions of your agribusiness along with in-depth answers is an especially helpful resource for users planning a visit.
- **Feedback**–Get reviews and information from clients to make your operation better.
- **Location**–Feature a region map highlighting your location and proximity to other points of interest.
- **Schedule**–Describe when and where your services, products, and activities are available.
- **Price List and Payment Options**–Guests will be able to see price’s for activities
- **Contact Information**–Include information on how and where you or other key employees may be contacted so people can talk with a person.

Choose a descriptive title for your site and place it into the html “title tag” of your home page. This will show up at the top of a viewer’s browser, as well as help search engines find your site. Make sure your designer uses a Meta tag (in the html) that fully describes your business. This helps most search engines locate your site.

Good quality photos in a format that loads quickly are important and necessary. Multimedia can be helpful, but remember everyone doesn’t have high-speed connections. Considering that not all users can receive audio, video, or animation files, it’s best to offer several options. Choose formats with universal support by web browser plug-ins.

Online questionnaires may be a useful tool for measuring the effectiveness of your website in providing people with what they need and want. Websites can be altered quickly and easily to accommodate any necessary updates. The information also can be viewed and printed out by interested parties.

Hints:

1. View other websites to get ideas
2. Decide how you want yours to look
3. Make it user friendly

Costs to develop a website can range from a few hundred dollars to free if you can find a student with necessary skills who may need experience. There also are free hosts, or you can pay anywhere from \$500 or more. These fees don't include video, animation, or audio if you plan to use a professional.

A very good source for developing a website is the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), an organization of volunteers who offer free, confidential help and advice to small business owners. Their website is:

[www.va-interactive.com/score/buildwebsite/buildwebsite.html](http://www.va-interactive.com/score/buildwebsite/buildwebsite.html)

<b>Marketing Methods</b>	<b>Pro's and Con's</b>
Internet Website	Available 24/7. Contains a great deal of information. Consider the user.
Internet Ad	Great for specific target audience
Brochures	Common and expected. Per piece cost is low
Business Card	Inexpensive, easy to get limited information to clients. Everybody wants one.
Mail outs	Good for current customers and target areas.
Yellow Pages	Expensive, not always effective in rural areas
Trade Shows	Great face-to-face contact. Expensive and time consuming
Coupons	Generates interest, but watch profit margin
Word of Mouth	Great when positive
T.V.	Effective for the masses, but expensive
Radio	Average effectiveness
Newspaper Ad	Good exposure, time limited
Articles in Paper	Good exposure
Magazines	Very good in targeting audience
Press Release	Good exposure, if news worthy
Special Interest	Great coverage
Public Service Announcement	Useful if a true PSA
Sponsorship	Can be effective
Road side Signs	May be hard to obtain
Movie Theatre Slide	Can be effective in attracting attention of "captive" audience waiting for start of movies

Marketing lays the groundwork by communicating why customers should buy your products or service. Sales "close the deal" and bring in the money. Create a simple, yet clear marketing message that describes your agribusiness' market positioning and consistently use it.





## Section 5

### Breaking Ground

From establishing goals, and finding what experience you can offer, to writing your business and marketing plans, each aspect works independently. To tie it all together, you must know how your daily operation will run. Everyone must be fully trained in how to be helpful and meet the needs and desires of the customer, as well as their own specific job duties and others' job duties. Demands may seem 'great' and time will seem 'short in supply'. You may not have to work harder, but smarter. Start by carefully planning your time. Allow your enthusiasm and passion for agritourism to carry you through the early business planning stages up through the first day you open and beyond.

#### ***Developing an Operations Plan***

Similar to your business plan, your day-to-day business administration or operation plan provides the organizational structure for your business. Careful planning during the initial stages can eliminate many frustrations. You should also plan for contingencies and work toward accomplishing long-term goals during transitions so your business' growth period proves less problematic.

Begin developing an operations plan by deciding:

- The activities to be carried out to operate the business.
- The schedule for these activities.
- Personnel to carry out the activities.
- Job responsibilities.
- Talents and skills necessary to make the business operate smoothly.
- Managing shortfalls.

"Patience is the most important thing to have!"

Linda Cochran  
Roca Country Inn, Roca, NE

#### ***Administrative Planning***

Good management and communications are pivotal to a successful business. No matter how well a business plan is implemented, you won't accomplish your goals unless there is an effective manager behind it—one who knows how to communicate well.

## ***Job Responsibilities***

Organizing job responsibilities is important to make sure everything goes smoothly. Many agricultural businesses operate with relatively few employees (10 or less) and the tendency is for everyone to be responsible for everything. However, it's highly recommended that you divide duties, or put individuals in charge of specific tasks. The key to a successful business operation is attention to details and mundane activities, which few enjoy.

Labor requirements of each task undertaken in an agritourism business needs to be estimated. The timing of each task must be matched against available free time of family members (and hired help, if applicable). It may be helpful to map this out on a timeline for weeks and maybe months. Some tasks, such as improving trails, can be scheduled during off-season. Make sure employees have the chance to ask questions during any business meetings.

An accounting system should already be in place. Experience shows that a business is more apt to survive if there is organized bookkeeping done in a timely manner. Set up a bookkeeping system that "fits" your business. Use a method that allows you to easily extract and use information when making management decisions. Don't combine the business system with personal or other business information. Contact an accountant who's familiar with agritourism businesses, or consider using readily available computer programs. Establish this system early in the process of planning your business activity.

As operations begin, you'll need to maintain records and generate reports allowing members and outside stakeholders, such as lenders, to monitor the financial performance and standing of your business. Particular attention needs to be devoted to monitoring and managing accounts receivable and payable since cash flow problems can quickly cause a crisis for a business getting established. Financial records also can help you monitor the business and plan for future operations based on financial knowledge rather than guesswork.

You, your family members and other employees also will need to strengthen and formalize relations you've established with existing customers. The way you respond to questions and concerns, connect with your customers,

and promote your products and services during your first months of operation will establish an image of your agritourism business. This will affect your ability to retain old customers and attract new ones for years to come. Reservations, or requests or more information may be made by telephone. Phone lines should be open. Ensure that the first point of contact is friendly, knowledgeable, and answers the phone with a “smile in their voice”. Forms should be composed to easily and accurately record necessary information.

See Worksheet Section - Plan of Operations

### **Staff**

Almost all businesses need to add staff as they grow. Taking on new employees is a major step in the life of any business, so it warrants careful planning. Training and supervision will require a significant amount of time as an employer. Wages and other benefits that you offer family and employees will vary with industry rates and standards, according to the type of work involved, and the values you hold. You’ll need to discuss hiring new employees with partners or family members. A good place to begin developing your benefit strategy is by reviewing industry standards. Find out what wages and other benefits are typical for a business such as yours, and adjust them according to your goals and values. In addition to cash wages or salaries, common forms of labor compensation include housing, insurance, retirement investments, or stock and shares of the business.

Staff training is an essential component for ensuring a high level of customer satisfaction. Staff must be knowledgeable about your operation, services and products and the amenities available in local areas. They should familiarize themselves with area attractions, local restaurants and accommodations. Knowledgeable and friendly employees will lead to satisfied customers. Outstanding customer service doesn’t happen by accident. The University of Nebraska offers a program called the Red Carpet Service. The program offers customized training to help people create positive experiences for visitors so they want to come back again and again. For more information, contact the University of Nebraska Rural Initiative Program (See Resource

Section) or go online to: [ruralinitiative.nebraska.edu/](http://ruralinitiative.nebraska.edu/) and click on *Red Carpet Service*

### ***Listen to Your Guests***

Satisfying customers requires good listening and communication skills. Find out what visitors like. Provide short, easy-to-complete comment or suggestion cards that customers can fill out and drop into suggestion boxes.

Based on visitor suggestions, you may choose to expand. Consider adding fun, entertaining activities, such as contests, adult and children's classes, or games ranging from guessing how many apples are in a barrel to pedal boat races. Children love corn mazes, horseback riding and fishing. Adults enjoy activities, such as historic displays, or classes/workshops on wine tasting or bird watching. The better you know and understand the customer or customers you want to attract, the easier to create activities tailored to their interests.

Your guests can be your best advisors. If they have complaints or concerns, listen to their problems or frustrations without interruption. Ease their situation by remaining calm and attempting to understand their problem completely. Calmly ask questions to ensure everyone understands the situation. Suggest several options and allow visitors to make their own decisions. This will make them more satisfied and secure knowing they made the decision, and it will reduce the pressure on you to choose the course of action.

Guests remember little things, and happy customers will return. They also will tell friends and family about your agribusiness. You can add value to your guests' experiences by offering them refreshments, or sending them home with

#### Ten Commandments of Good Business

1. GUESTS are the most important people in the business.
2. GUESTS are not dependent on us - operators are dependent on them.
3. GUESTS are not an interruption of our work.
4. GUESTS do us a favor when they call - operators are not doing them a favor by serving them.
5. GUESTS are a part of our business - they are not outsiders.
6. GUESTS are not cold statistics; they are human beings with feelings and emotions like your own.
7. GUESTS are not to be argued with.
8. GUESTS are those who bring us their wants - it is our job to fill those wants.
9. GUESTS are deserving of the most courteous and attentive treatment we can give them.
10. GUESTS are the reason of the livelihood in agritourism enterprises.

Agra Business Council of Oregon

photos of their experience. Select products that compliment what you produce on your farm or ranch. You also may opt to distribute recipe pamphlets, pins, posters, and other promotional items. Many commodity commissions and agricultural trade organizations in Nebraska have promotional items that are available free of charge or for a nominal cost.



## **Section 6**

### **Issues to Consider from A to Z**

#### **Accessibility**

Your agritourism business has the potential to attract many different kinds of people. Children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities may need special accommodations at your facilities. Using common sense is critical. If buses must park away from your farm, plan for drop-off and loading areas close to attractions.



A hayrack ride through a vineyard can be a charming and educational way to move visitors around your property.

The American Disabilities Act is a federal civil rights law prohibiting the exclusion of people with disabilities from everyday activities for businesses that employ more than 15 people. This law doesn't necessarily mean that agritourism businesses, such as roadside stands have to install handicapped accessible restrooms, but it does mean that operators need to accommodate people with disabilities by taking the produce to the car for them to purchase<sup>21</sup>. The

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<sup>21</sup> Hamilton, Dean. [The Legal Guide for Direct Farm Marketing](#). June 199



guidelines, *ADA Guide for Small Businesses*, from the U.S. Department of Justice can be viewed at [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/smbusgd.pdf](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/smbusgd.pdf). In addition, tax credits and deductions were established and can be used annually to offset the costs of providing access to people with disabilities. Contact the U.S. Department of Justice: [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada) for information on the Disabled Access Credit (Also, see Resource Section—Department of Justice contact info).

### **Complying with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Modifications to your farm attraction to allow for different access include the following:

- A hard packed or paved surface for trails, parking lots, etc.
- Space reserved for handicapped parking depending on numbers of customers.
- One bathroom accessible to the handicapped (can be rented).
- Door openings at least 36 inches wide (to accommodate wheelchairs) and doors able to be opened with a closed fist (door knobs are out).
- A ramp to a platform for the hay wagon for hayrides or for access to a fishing pond.
- Transportation options.

Other potential ideas include the following and may not be necessary as long as the operator or employee is willing to help.

- A "long reacher" for apple picking.
- Raised beds for strawberry picking.
- For seasonal events, a sign saying, "If you need assistance..."
- Large-print signs, brochures, or audiotapes of brochures.
- Rugs taped to the floor with Velcro.

**A disclaimer requesting that visitors inform whether special accommodations are needed may be added to websites or brochures. An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) representative will be glad to advise you on more specifics.**

## **Amenities**

An amenity can be tangible, such as fishing, or intangible, such as a feeling of safety or sense of community. In addition to the scenic beauty of the sand hills, the abundant wildlife and all other natural amenities found in Nebraska technology has become part of the "urban amenity" that is needed for the comfort of today's society. Peoples' idea of "roughing it" may greatly differ. For example, some people prefer simple or rustic and may not desire electricity or even a bed,

while the next person may expect a microwave oven, warm bed and Internet access. Easy access to a phone, good cell phone reception and access to high speed Internet may be expected. Providing these or any other amenities is a marketing point and should be mentioned in brochures and on websites. Whatever the case, if the agribusiness is plush or rustic, visitors view amenities as the “final touch”.



Could it be any more inviting than this?

## **Business Name**

The choice of a name is critical. To make sure that another business is not already using the proposed name of your business, you must register it with the state. You are taking a risk if you begin printing business cards, establishing a website or start advertising prior to receiving official written confirmation of your business name. You can check to see what business names are currently in use in the state by going to the Nebraska Secretary of State website, Corporate Division webpage: [http://www.sos.state.ne.us/business/corp\\_serv/](http://www.sos.state.ne.us/business/corp_serv/). Depending on the legal structure of your business, you may be assessed a fee to register

the name. The Nebraska Secretary of State Corporate Division also has registration procedures available at:

[www.sos.state.ne.us/business/corp\\_serv/name\\_procedures.html](http://www.sos.state.ne.us/business/corp_serv/name_procedures.html). Application forms for trademarks and corporation names also can be acquired by clicking on “Forms” on the Nebraska Secretary of State-Corporate Division website: [www.sos.state.ne.us/](http://www.sos.state.ne.us/).

(Also, see Resource Section—Nebraska Secretary of State-Corporate Division contact info).

It’s important to realize that a business name may already be held by a business in another state. To avoid conflicting with trademark or unfair competition laws, it’s wise to do a trademark search before choosing a name for your business or names for any products or services. Once you’re satisfied that your business name is free and clear for your use, you may want to protect it by registering with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to prevent any other business from using the same name or one close to it. You also can register any logos. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office’s website features directions on how to register your trademark. To check on currently registered federal and state(s) trademarks, contact the U.S. Patent and Trademark Offices (see Resource Section).

If you need more information, go online to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development’s Existing Business Assistance Division: <http://assist.neded.org>.

(Also, see Resource Section for Nebraska Department of Economic Development Existing Business Assistance Division contact info).

## **Business Structure**

When starting a new agritourism business, you’ll want to consider establishing a formal business entity, separate from your home and farm or ranch. To do so, you must decide what legal form of business to establish. You may want to consult an attorney or tax advisor to see which option best fits your operation. Five common forms of businesses are:

- Sole Proprietorship
- Partnerships

- S Corporation
- Corporation
- Limited Liability Company (LLC)

Each business type involves different responsibilities and liability protections. Investigate and learn more about the advantages and disadvantages of each before entering into any form of shared ownership. More information can be found at Nebraska's Cooperative Extension NebFacts website. (Setting Up Your Own Business: The Sole Proprietorship. NF 96-253, Setting Up Your Own Business: The Partnership. NF96-254, Setting Up Your Own Business: The "S" Corporation. NF 96-255. Setting Up Your Own Business: The "C" Corporation. NF 96-256. Setting Up Your Own Business: The Limited Liability Company. NF 96-257 )

## **Employees**

Hiring employees creates a new set of business management issues. However, many operators have already dealt with hired help, so some issues may not be entirely new. In any case, it's important to note again that an agritourism venture is very different from traditional agriculture. Consider carefully whom you hire. Employees' responsibilities will have to match with individual's capabilities. Nebraska Labor Laws can be found at: [www.dol.state.ne.us/legallaws/toc.pdf](http://www.dol.state.ne.us/legallaws/toc.pdf). (Also see Resource Section—Nebraska Workforce Development, Nebraska Department of Labor contact info. For answers to federal labor law questions, see Resource Section—U.S. Department of Labor contact info).

Remember, before your first payroll is paid, you need to apply for and secure a Nebraska withholding number on the Nebraska Tax Application, Form 20 (which also is discussed in the Licenses and Permits section below). A *Nebraska* Withholding Certificate bearing your state identification number will be mailed. Information can be found at: [www.revenue.ne.gov](http://www.revenue.ne.gov) (Also, see Resource Section—Nebraska Department of Revenue contact info).



Farm machinery can be a great attraction especially when linked to an event or festival.

## Facilities and Equipment

- Tractors and Equipment: Park tractors and equipment within eyesight (if desired), but away from the visitor's area. Agricultural equipment fascinates people; however, a tractor often becomes a climbing object for children (even when supervised by adults). Discuss tractor safety with employees and guests and instill respect for your equipment. Never allow visitors to drive farm equipment.
- Pest Management Materials: Pesticides, herbicides, and other farm management products should be safely stored in a secure location and away from public view.
- Ladders: Store ladders away from trees and public spaces to eliminate the temptation to climb. This is particularly important with regard to children and youth.
- Shops and repair facilities are among the most hazardous places on the farm and should be kept off limits to the public. Close and/or lock the entrance door with a "Do Not Enter" or "Employees Only" sign. Have farm personnel check these areas often.

## Grant Sources

In addition to obtaining traditional loans from banks, grant funding be available for qualifying agritourism operations. The agencies (listed below) can share any knowledge about available grants, grant writing, and grant management. In some cases, you may want to consider hiring a grant writer for a fee, but remember that it doesn't automatically guarantee a grant award.

The purpose of the Value-Added Producers Grant with the USDA Rural Development is to help agricultural groups, cooperatives and majority-owned producer-based business ventures develop strategies to create marketing opportunities in emerging markets.

Many different grants are available and information is available online at: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne), [assist.neded.org/](http://assist.neded.org/), <http://www.visitnebraska.org>, [www.outdoornebraska.org](http://www.outdoornebraska.org), and [www.nal.usda.gov/ric/](http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/)

(Also, see Resource Section—United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and National Agriculture Library Rural Information Center contact info, respective to above websites).

## Identification Numbers

- **Federal Identification Number**

A business's federal employer identification number also known as the EIN, FEIN, or Federal Tax Identification Number, is equivalent to an individual's Social Security Number. To obtain an EIN, a business name and the legal structure must be known. A certificate will be issued to the business with the appropriate identification number. EINs are issued to entities, such as sole proprietors, corporations, partnerships, and nonprofit organizations. An EIN is required for partnerships and corporations. Sole proprietorships must have an EIN if wages are paid to one or more employees. The one exception is that sole proprietors having no employees, can use their own Social Security

Number instead of an EIN. Contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for application form SS-4 [www.missouribusiness.net/irs/pdfs/fss4.pdf](http://www.missouribusiness.net/irs/pdfs/fss4.pdf), *Application for Employer Identification Number*. To find out more about EINs, call the IRS at 1-800-829-4933, or use the IRS website for small businesses at [www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html)

- **State Identification Number**

In addition to the Federal Tax Identification Number, any business located and transacting business in Nebraska and paying wages or sales taxes must withhold Nebraska State tax. Complete a Nebraska Tax Application (Form 20) to secure a Nebraska Tax Identification Number. To obtain a form, call 1-800-742-7474 or go to [www.revenue.ne.gov/tax/current/f\\_20.pdf](http://www.revenue.ne.gov/tax/current/f_20.pdf).

Federal and State Employer Identification Numbers are permanent numbers. It is a good idea to keep this certificate in your records. To hire employees you will need state and federal Identification Numbers. If the legal entity of the enterprise changes then a new number must be obtained.

## **Insurance**

Running a business is risky. Advice on how to make sure your operation is properly insured against every possible hazard that may arise could alone fill a book. When it comes to choosing insurance, all business owners take calculated risks. Some may go all out and insure their businesses while others may choose not to insure at all.

Adequate liability insurance is imperative. Most policies that cover general farm and ranch activities do not cover agritourism activities on the land. Once you allow people to enter your premises on a commercial basis, all rules change, and it is necessary to recognize an entire new way of doing business. You'll either need to add a rider to your existing policy or purchase a new policy with a company that insures your particular activity. As a rule, you should maintain enough liability insurance coverage to protect personal assets as much as economically possible.

It's difficult to find a standard policy that fits all agritourism operations, since each one is different from the next. Your local agent or an insurance broker can help you find a company if needed. Premiums may be higher than traditional agricultural operations. The premium will be based on the activities you offer. Make sure your agent understands the various activities that take place at your farm or ranch to ensure that you obtain all types of insurance coverage you need.

The following activities will be reviewed closely by an insurance company and require special coverage:

- Hunting
- Trapping
- Fishing
- Lodging
- Food Services
- Alcohol Usage
- Animals (especially horses)
- Landing Strips on the Property

Remember, before hosting groups of visitors or planning public events, check with your insurance agent about the adequacy of your liability coverage. An event insurance rider may be necessary.

Premium rates vary among insurance companies, based on the exposure of risk for a particular fee-recreation activity. The rates are affected by the portion of the enterprise devoted to recreation and the type of available activities.

Additionally, your managerial capability as an operator appears to be significant

Questions to ask when comparing insurance coverage:

1. Is there a deductible?
2. Does the insurance apply to liability for:
  - premises and operations?
  - products and operations?
  - contractual liability to others?
  - personal injury to others (libel, slander, invasion of privacy)?
  - advertising injury to others?
  - property liability damage to others?
  - incidental medical malpractice liability resulting from aiding an injured person?
  - Non-owned watercraft liability?
  - host liquor liability?
3. Are employees added as additional insureds?
4. Is the premium a set fee, based on a percentage of gross sales, or client days?
5. Are there representations in the policy that guests or operators must adhere to for a claim to be honored?
8. Does the insurance agent understand your proposed fee-based recreation business?



in determining premiums. Some questions for consideration regarding insurance for your enterprise are:

1. Is the difference between the insurance premium and the income gained enough to offset each other yet still allow a sufficient financial gain to make the venture worthwhile?
2. Can you realistically pass the costs of insurance onto the customers, or will the added expense reduce the customer demand for the activity?

You should not only meet with your agent or an insurance broker about the options and cost of insurance, but with other farmers and ranchers engaged in similar enterprises. Join organizations that represent your kind of agribusiness. A number of these organizations can seek informal arrangements with insurance companies. Seek legal counsel to discuss the liability concerns and organizational structure. Remember, your primary liability precaution is to take the necessary steps to protect customers. This will help avoid most liability issues. (Refer to Liability section below.)

## **Legal Concerns**

### **Nebraska Recreation Liability Act**

The purpose of the Nebraska Recreation Liability Act "is to encourage owners of land to make available to the public land and water areas for recreational purposes by limiting their liability toward persons entering thereon...". The encouragement takes the form of protecting the landowner from legal liability for any accidents that may happen when the user is on the property for recreational purposes. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Pheasants Forever have teamed up to create Conservation Reserve Program–Management Access Program (CRP-MAP), a unique habitat and access program offered only in Nebraska. Landowners and tenants who enroll in CRP-MAP are afforded some protection from liability through the Nebraska Recreation Liability Act.

Recreational uses include a variety of activities from hunting to nature studies. The law states it is not limited to the activities listed. The only exceptions

are for intentional harm and gross negligence. This act primarily protects those who do **not** charge for recreational purposes.

### **Nebraska Equine Liability Act**

The Nebraska Equine Liability Act protects horse owners, shows, stables, and other equine providers from frivolous lawsuits arising from horse-related accidents that couldn't be avoided. The statute provides that a person may not bring a lawsuit if the accident resulted from an inherent risk of equine activities. The equine provider must post notices to bring their operations under the statute's protection. The "Warning" notice signs shall be placed in a clearly visible location on or near stables, corrals, or arenas where equine professionals conduct equine related activities. These notices must contain exactly the words and proper font size required by Nebraska's statute.

### **Liability - Managing and Reducing Risks**

Liability is a concern when the public is invited to visit or work on a farm or ranch. Research has shown, however, that there are very few insurance claims relative to the level of activity. Nonetheless, every agritourism enterprise must be adequately protected. Most farm and ranch insurance policies will need to be altered, or a new one added to cover liability (refer back to *Insurance* in this section).

The bottom line is that certain common sense steps should be taken to minimize the liability risks associated with agritourism activities. Certain problems can be avoided with proper structuring and planning for fee-based recreational activities. There are management strategies to minimize your liability exposure. Farm visits imply risks and potential liability to farm owners, should accidents resulting in injuries to visitors occur. Safety is your first priority when entertaining visitors to your farm or ranch, or when consumers visit your operation to participate in picking fruits or vegetables or other farming experiences. Visitors' safety is largely your responsibility. The following suggestions serve as a guide to assess your own agritourism operation for potential hazards and prepare for a safe, enjoyable visit to your farm or ranch:

- Identify the specific areas guests will visit, the activities in which they will participate, how they will be supervised, the safety precautions you'll take, and any rules you'll need to post. For some activities, (horseback riding, for example) a "hold harmless agreement" may be a good idea. A "hold harmless" agreement indicates that the visitor is willing to assume responsibility for certain risks. It doesn't, however, absolve you of a certain level of responsibility for the health and safety of your visitors.
- Plan for Emergencies. Keep a well-stocked first aid kit handy. Be sure knowledgeable people on staff are CPR certified and have first aid skills. Develop an emergency plan for dealing with natural disasters, such as severe weather.
- Suggest that visitors wear appropriate clothing, such as close-toed shoes (tennis shoes or boots, but not sandals). Long pants are recommended for certain activities. Weather conditions may require special clothing, especially if traveling from a different region.
- When you brief visitors, explain that you operate a working production facility. As such, certain hazards come with the territory (uneven ground, insects, climate, and farm odors) and visitors must accept those risks and exercise reasonable caution.
- Clearly demarcate "off-limit" areas and specifically designated public areas. Rope off or block access to other areas.
- Access to water (ponds, streams, lakes, etc.) is of special concern where children are concerned. Make sure no visitors get too close to the water (secure with fencing and/or ropes). Don't trust parents to watch their children.
- Remote locations can be an asset if marketed correctly. Make it easy for visitors to find you. It's useful to provide clear and simple directions and signs along the way. Keep driveways graded and set up parking locations near the activity site. If guests arrive after dark, light the signage and driveway.

Incorporating a recreational business may be one way to ease the burden of liability. In theory, an individual isn't liable for any assets other than those he or she has invested in the corporation. Other types of organizations with some potential for limiting liabilities of their owners are limited partnerships and limited liabilities companies (refer back to *Business Structure* in this section).

Another means of protection against liability is to have recreational visitors sign liability release forms. To be an effective liability shield, the release must be drafted carefully. The courts generally construe release language against the drafter and severely limit the landowner's ability to contract away liability for the landowner's negligence. You may want to incorporate principles of firearms safety, require successful completion of hunter safety or horse riding basics, or prohibit use of alcohol.

## Licenses and Permits

Each business should verify with the city, county and state offices to ensure all licensing requirements are met.

Some businesses are required to hold special licenses for tax programs. Nebraska has several Tax Assistance Offices to help you with the necessary licensing and forms. For example, the Lodging Tax permits are part of the sales tax forms filled out and will be completed at the same time you register for your Nebraska identification number.

Applying for the Nebraska Tax Application, Form 20, ([www.revenue.ne.gov/tax/current/f\\_20.pdf](http://www.revenue.ne.gov/tax/current/f_20.pdf)) allows you to register for any or all of the following tax programs (those bolded with websites may directly affect your agritourism business):

- **Sales Tax**  
[www.revenue.ne.gov/info/6-352.pdf](http://www.revenue.ne.gov/info/6-352.pdf)
- Consumer's Use Tax  
[www.revenue.ne.gov/info/6-317.pdf](http://www.revenue.ne.gov/info/6-317.pdf)
- **Income Tax Withholding**
- **Corporate Income Tax**
- **Partnership Income Tax**
- Fiduciary Income Tax
- Financial Institution Tax
- Tire Fee

- **Lodging Tax**  
[www.revenue.ne.gov/info/5-141.pdf](http://www.revenue.ne.gov/info/5-141.pdf)
- Litter Fee
- Severance and Conservation Tax
- Wholesale Cigarette Dealers Tax
- License to Transport Unstamped Cigarettes
- Tobacco Products Tax

### **Food Service Establishments**

If your agritourism enterprise intends to prepare and sell food to the public, you'll need to contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture—Dairies and Foods Division. All food establishments in Nebraska are legally required to undergo inspection and licensing to meet the sanitation requirements. Restaurants, temporary food stands, processed food and some Bed & Breakfasts fall into this category. Find out what's necessary before proceeding with plans.

#### **Useful Websites**

*Requirements for Food Establishment Operations*  
[www.agr.state.ne.us/pub/daf/preopenlist.htm](http://www.agr.state.ne.us/pub/daf/preopenlist.htm).

*Basic Requirements for a Licensed Food Service Establishment*  
<http://assist.neded.org/foodregs.html>

*Food Safety and Regulation Requirements for Farmers Markets*  
[www.agr.state.ne.us/pub/daf/farmmkt.htm](http://www.agr.state.ne.us/pub/daf/farmmkt.htm)

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture website is:

<http://www.agr.state.ne.us/division/daf/food.htm>

(Also, see Resource Section—Nebraska Department of Agriculture contact info).

#### **Liquor License**

Any where liquor is sold a liquor license is required. Liquor laws are complex and vary according to the types of businesses. For basic information, refer to *Qualifications Required to Obtain a Liquor License* at [www.lcc.ne.gov/qualifications.html](http://www.lcc.ne.gov/qualifications.html), or the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission website: <http://www.lcc.ne.gov/index.html>

(Also, see Resource Section—Nebraska Liquor Control Commission contact info).

## **Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Permits**

### ***Fishing and Hunting Permits***

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission have made obtaining permits for your visitors easy by going online to purchase the appropriate permit:

<http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/hunting/guides/permfees.asp>

### ***Put and Take Permits***

For people whose farms or ranches encompass private lakes, ponds, streams, etc., and those who want to charge for people who are non-licensed, a *Commercial Put and Take Permit* must be obtained by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission—Fisheries Division.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission website is:

[www.outdoornebraska.org](http://www.outdoornebraska.org)

(Also, see Resource Section—Nebraska Game and Parks Commission contact info).

## **Livestock and Animals**

### **International Visitors**

Taking precautionary measures against the spread of foreign diseases in animals and crops is extremely important. Agriculture friendly protocol has been adopted as the “Animal Health and Regulations for International Visitors”. Travelers to the United States are cautioned not to travel for at least five days near farms, sale barns, zoos, fairs, or other sites where livestock are kept. To view these and additional precautions go to <http://www.agr.ne.gov/pub/apd/beef.htm>.

### **Safety**

Farm staff should supervise all interactions between animals and guests. Animals will behave differently around crowds of people. They should be penned or confined for viewing, with limited, controlled access for petting. Carefully select your most healthy, "user-friendly" animals for

public interaction. Beside visitor's safety, animal well being is very imperative. Give adequate attention to odor, ventilation, manure, and fly and pest control in the visitor area.

- Pets: Ensure only very friendly, social dogs are allowed near the public. However, warn visitors of a puppy's sharp teeth. Even friendly dogs can do damage.
- Cats and kittens: Be wary of sharp claws and teeth.
- Small livestock: Goats and sheep are generally more widely used as petting animals. As ruminants with no top front teeth, they can be hand-fed more safely than a horse with top teeth. Also, they are smaller and lighter if they step on a child's foot.
- Poultry: Geese can be very aggressive. Chickens, ducks, and other poultry may be fed. However, to limit the stress on the animals, be sure to rotate them.
- Cattle and calves: Restrain any cattle that will be handled, preferably in a grooming chute. Calves should be controlled. Hand milking cows is not recommended.
- Horses and ponies: Warn visitors animals may bite. Horse and pony riding requires special rules and insurance. Consult your agent.
- Post a "Please wash your hands after handling animals" sign.
- Provide hand washing facilities, hand wipes, or sanitizing hand cleaner in convenient areas.



Petting areas of farm animals are popular. Keep in mind the safety needs for visitors when they are in contact with farm animals.

## **Other Resource Programs**

Through the Natural Resource District (NRD) tree-planting programs, landowners have access to low-cost trees and shrubs for windbreaks, erosion control, wildlife habitat, and other conservation purposes at <http://www.dnr.state.ne.us/>. Districts have different programs so check with your NRD office first.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC)—Fisheries Division operates a fish-stocking program. If the NGPC stocks fish, you are **not** allowed to charge for fishing. Certain restrictions, such as size and depth apply. For more information contact NGPC or go online:

[www.ngpc.state.ne.us/fishing/guides/fishguide/FGprivate.asp](http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/fishing/guides/fishguide/FGprivate.asp).

## **Regulations**

Start by checking with local, state, and federal agencies that promulgate and enforce regulations. For example, if you plan to operate a Bed and Breakfast, or employ more than 15 people you will usually need a fire certificate. More information can be found at <http://assist.neded.org/bedbreakfirecode.htm>.



There may be certain limitations related to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land. The Farm Service Agency allows program participants to charge hunters a fee to hunt on their CRP ground. The handbook states that a CRP participant may lease hunting rights, charge fees for access to hunters, or conduct other similar hunting operations on CRP acreage as long as this activity occurs during the normal hunting season for the pursuit of game that is normal to the area. Hunting must be consistent with state laws and bag limits for the appropriate game species. CRP acreage shall not be disturbed during the primary nesting or brood rearing season regardless of hunting seasons. For more information, contact your local Farm Service Agency.

Other agencies to check with include the Nebraska Health and Human Services System, Planning and Zoning Boards, Nebraska departments of Agriculture, Environmental Quality, Revenue, Roads, and Economic Development, The Nebraska Travel and Tourism Division or Convention and Visitors' Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Nebraska Secretary of State, and the Rural Enterprise Assistance Project. There may be others in your locality. Check the *Resource* section for addresses and phone numbers.

## **Taxes**

The following information is offered as general guidance only; therefore it is advisable to consult an accountant or the IRS for complete and up to date information.

Taxes for small businesses can seem extremely complicated. The form of organization you choose (sole proprietor, partnership or corporations) affects your tax reporting requirements. An EIN needs to be obtained before the payment of wages because they are subject to Nebraska withholding.

Consideration should be given to:

- Self-employment Tax
- Sales Tax
- Income Tax
- Social Security taxes
- State taxes
- Unemployment Tax

When developing your business be sure to consult a professional accountant who's familiar with small businesses and can assist you in understanding your legal obligations and developing a tax plan that best suits your operation.

Additional information may be obtained from:

- U.S. Small Business Administration
  - Starting Your Business–[http://www.sba.gov/starting\\_business/](http://www.sba.gov/starting_business/) U.S. Business Advisor–[www.business.gov/](http://www.business.gov/)
- IRS (<http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/content/0,,id=98942,00.html>)
  - Starting a Business and Keeping Records
  - Business Use of Your Home
  - Self Employment Tax
  - Small Business and Self Employment Taxpayer
  - Small Business Talk
  - Small Business Tax Workshop Workbook

## **Weights and Measures**

The Nebraska Weights and Measures Act regulates the retail sale of fruits, vegetables, and other items. In accordance with section 89-187-01 of the Nebraska Weights and Measures Act, no person shall operate a commercial weighing and/or measuring device without a valid permit from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture for each establishment in the state housing such a device. Vendors may erroneously believe they are exempt from these regulations because they sell relatively little compared to a supermarket, or because they only sell for a few months of the year. They're wrong. The Nebraska Weights and Measures Act applies to all sales. The regulation was established to ensure that buyers receive sufficient and accurate information with which to compare quantity and price. Even if you sell by count, "three ears of corn for \$1," for example, compliance with the Weights and Measures Act is necessary. Complying with the regulations protects you as a vendor from perceptions of shortchanging or misrepresenting your products.

For more information go online at: [www.agr.ne.gov/division/wam/wam.htm](http://www.agr.ne.gov/division/wam/wam.htm)

(Also, see Resource Section—Nebraska Department of Agriculture Weights and Measures Division contact info.)

Information about Nebraska's Farmers Markets can be found at:

Nebraska Cooperative Extension, Neb Guide NF97-344 (Revised February 2004) *Weights and Measures Guidelines for Sales at Farmers' Markets, Roadside Stands and Other Commercial Outlets*  
[ianrpubs.unl.edu/horticulture/nf344.htm](http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/horticulture/nf344.htm)

## **Zoning**

Although this is last on the issues to consider, it may be one of the most critical points. For those Nebraska counties that have zoning laws (not all do), it's important to make sure that the business is, or can be properly zoned. If you have a concern about your activity, contact your county officials for your zoning ordinances. Your county may stipulate certain zoning requirements for agritourism activities. Select a site that complies with local zoning. A good step is to talk to other agritourism businesses in your area.

## **Section 7**

### **Time for R and R (Review and Revise)**

You need to have a firm grasp of all phases of your business in order for it to survive and grow. Keep on top of your financial situation, respond positively to change, and be flexible and open to adjusting your long-term business plan if necessary.

#### ***Tracking Your Progress***

Check your business plan at least once or twice a month to track your goals and remind yourself of upcoming tasks. Remember that some tasks or goals may ultimately take more time than you originally planned, but this isn't necessarily bad. Be mindful that there may be greater demands placed on your business once it's up and running. It also is a good idea to reassess your resources. Review your worksheets and use them to make a more in-depth assessment of the resources available to you and your family.

#### ***Watch the Numbers***

It's important to compare your figures and other benchmarks with projections in your business plan. If you're consistently pulling in less revenue than you projected, but still able to cover your expenses, don't be too hard on yourself. Once you see that your early projections may have been overly optimistic, you may want to reevaluate your plans. Enthusiasm is hard to harness when first starting out. While, enthusiasm promotes good experiences for customers, reality is needed for the numbers. However, after you have a better idea of what it really takes and how much you and your family are able to accomplish in the course of a day, it will be easier to adjust plans.

#### ***Who's Buying?***

Keep track of the products and services that your customers most often purchase and are most interested in. Surveying your customers, or maintaining a guest book will aid in your evaluations and help you make better overall business decisions. For example, customer surveys or comments may lead you to advertise more or adapt your products or services to another niche market. To

broaden your customer base, be ready to make necessary improvements. Each investment should be analyzed carefully. Costly improvements could be delayed or completed in stages as sufficient cash flow develops from the recreation enterprise. Improvements that benefit several enterprises should receive higher priority than those directed at a single purpose.

The market is ever changing, and you need to make every effort to keep up with events. To survive, businesses need to keep evolving. Evolution can be anything from a minor improvement, such as adding new landscaping at the entrance, to a major change, such as launching a new product or service. Often small changes added together can make a large positive impact.

### ***To Grow or Not to Grow***

There will come a time when you need to decide whether or not to grow your business. This is not only a business decision, but also a personal one. Discuss and reevaluate yourself, your family, your lifestyle, the market and the overall business.

If you decide to grow your business, your approach will depend on your goals, values, plans, financial state and the nature of your business. You may want to consider expanding your line of products or services. While adding more activities may be risky, the potential for new visitors may outweigh the risk. Adding more employees, or inviting more partners to join the enterprise may also need to be considered.

Growth can be controlled; it's possible to put the brakes on if you want to grow your business at a more reasonable pace. For example, limit customers by using advanced reservations only. When the reservation book is full, courteously direct customers to a nearby comparable vendor. Referrals become a two-way street. Whatever your decision, make sure it is the best one for you, your family and your business. Remember to refer back to the earlier sections of this book looking at your values, goals, what you can offer and if it is economically feasible.

[See Worksheet Section – Revisiting Goals](#)

## ***Stay Informed and Hit the Road***

As you run your own business, it is easy to get out of the loop and become isolated and less aware of changes taking place all around you. To overcome this, you need to create a support and information network. This may include joining organizations, or groups involved in enterprises similar to yours. You may become a member of an association, such as the Nebraska Winery and Grape Growers Association or the Nebraska Association of Bed and Breakfasts. You may see if other local entrepreneurs want to join you in your business venture or start their own agritourism or alternative enterprises.

Off-season is a time to get out and sell your business. Creating public awareness and demand for your products and services involves a commitment to promotion. Budget and time restraints may limit you, but there are many options. Evaluate and choose the option that best fits your operation, budget and clients.

- Attend conferences, field days, workshops, and trade shows.
- Purchase books, videos, newsletters, magazines, and other publications.
- Go to the library and do some research. Use the Internet to get the most up-to-date information. If you don't have an Internet connection at home, one should be available to you at the library.
- Talk to neighbors, friends and other agritourism operators about their businesses.
- Visit businesses in your surrounding area and neighboring counties or states, to see what they are doing and how they are running their businesses.
- Explore and investigate new alternatives.
- Continue visiting with resource people in your county, region, or state.

## **Summary**

It will be exciting for you as an entrepreneur when your business is up and running. Farm and ranch owners and tourism promoters and planners working together can create a successful agritourism program out of existing resources and attractions. Nebraska has a lot to offer, and Nebraskans can be proud of that. The beauty of vast, wide-open prairie, the variety of seasons, and the

wonderful, hospitable people make Nebraska appealing for many tourists and for new agritourism ventures. Successful agritourism programs take a lot of effort. Careful planning, coordinating events and promotional materials, while managing existing farm businesses are essential.

By reading through this handbook, you have taken the first step to becoming more knowledgeable. Understanding more about tourism and agritourism will allow you to recognize opportunities. You must also identify your values and your family's values, goals, and resources. Good planning can help you see far enough out on the horizon to anticipate the most serious shortfalls – and then take steps to avoid them. Realize you will encounter some ups and downs but with all your hard work, you'll create something very gratifying. This handbook is just a beginning. Now it's up to you to become more educated, involved and excited about the opportunities that exist in agritourism.

## Section 8

### Resources

#### Nebraska Tourism Contacts

**Nebraska Department of Economic Development  
Travel and Tourism Division  
301 Centennial Mall South, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
P.O. Box 98907  
Lincoln, NE 68509-8907  
402-471-3796 • 1-800-426-6505 or 1-877-NEBRASKA  
Fax: 402-471-3026  
tourism@VisitNebraska.org • [www.VisitNebraska.org](http://www.VisitNebraska.org)**

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Travel Conference Awards  
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York, NE 68467-4222  
402-362-1844  
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## Nebraska Department of Economic Development

**P.O. Box 94666**  
**301 Centennial Mall South**  
**Lincoln, NE 68509-4666**  
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Cell: 308-631-7780  
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## Nebraska Regional Tourism Organization Contacts

### **Nebraska Central Platte River Regional Council**

*Renee Seifert*  
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Grand Island, NE 68801  
308-382-4400  
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### **Northeast Nebraska Travel Council**

*Lora Young*  
Norfolk & Madison Co. CVB  
PO Box 386  
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Norfolk, NE 68702-0386  
402-371-2932  
888-371-2932  
[mcvb@norfolk.ne.us](mailto:mcvb@norfolk.ne.us)  
[www.travelnenebraska.com](http://www.travelnenebraska.com)

### **Western Nebraska Tourism Coalition**

*Jerrod Haberman*  
Panhandle Area Development District  
1432 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Gering, NE 69341  
308-436-6584  
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[www.westnebraska.com](http://www.westnebraska.com)

### **Southwest Nebraska Tourism Council**

*Andela Taylor*  
611 Paxton St.  
PO Box 86  
Cambridge, NE 69022  
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### **Southeast Nebraska Tourism Council**

*Bonnie King*  
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226 South 6<sup>th</sup>  
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[infocvb@visitbeatrice.com](mailto:infocvb@visitbeatrice.com)  
[www.visitsoutheastnebraska.org](http://www.visitsoutheastnebraska.org)

### **South Platte United Chamber of Commerce**

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PO Box 185  
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[twillnerd@claycenterbank.com](mailto:twillnerd@claycenterbank.com)  
[www.spuccne.com](http://www.spuccne.com)

### **Nebraska Outback Tourism Coalition**

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North Central RC&D  
PO Box 130  
Bassett, NE 68714  
402-684-3347  
[ncnercd@huntel.net](mailto:ncnercd@huntel.net)  
[www.nebraskaoutback.com](http://www.nebraskaoutback.com)

## RC&D (Resource Conservation & Development Councils)

### **Five Rivers RC&D**

*Howard McNiff*  
140 N. 4<sup>th</sup> St.  
PO Box 626  
Tecumseh, NE 68450  
402-335-3347  
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### **Loup Basin RC&D**

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[www.loupbasinrcd.net](http://www.loupbasinrcd.net)

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### **Nebraska Loess Hills**

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### **PrairieLand RC&D**

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### **Sandhills RC&D**

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### **South Central Nebraska RC&D**

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### **Trailblazer RC&D**

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## Regional Economic Development Districts

### **Central Economic Development District (CNEDD)**

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### **Lincoln-Lancaster Area Planning Organization (LAPO)**

555 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 213  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 441-7491  
Fax: (402) 441-6377  
[www.ci.lincoln.ne.us](http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us)

### **Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA)**

2222 Cumming Street  
Omaha, NE 68102  
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Fax: (402) 342-0949

### **Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD)**

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### **Panhandle Area Development District (PADD)**

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[www.nepadd.com](http://www.nepadd.com)

### **South Central Economic Development District (SCEDD)**

Tim Loewenstein, Chairperson  
9393 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
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### **Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO)**

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Sioux City, IA 51102  
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[www.simpco.org/](http://www.simpco.org/)

### **Southeast Nebraska Development District (SENDN)**

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### **West Central Nebraska Development District (WCNDD)**

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## State Government Agencies

### **Nebraska Department of Agriculture**

301 Centennial Mall South  
Lincoln, NE 68509  
402-471-2341  
Fax: 402-471-2759  
[www.agr.state.ne.us](http://www.agr.state.ne.us)

### **Dairies and Foods Division**

P.O. Box 95064  
Lincoln, NE 68509-5064  
402-471-2536  
Fax: 402-471-2759  
Website:  
[www.agr.state.ne.us/division/daf/food.htm](http://www.agr.state.ne.us/division/daf/food.htm)

Weights and Measures Division  
P.O. Box 94757  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4757  
402-471-4292  
Fax: 402-471-2759  
Website:  
[www.agr.state.ne.us/division/wam/wam.htm](http://www.agr.state.ne.us/division/wam/wam.htm)

**Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality**

1200 "N" St, Ste. 400  
P.O. Box 98922  
Lincoln, NE 68509-8922  
402-471-2186-8922  
[www.deq.state.ne.us/](http://www.deq.state.ne.us/)

**Nebraska Department of Labor**

Nebraska Workforce Development  
Labor and Safety Standards  
301 Centennial Mall South  
P.O. Box 95024  
Lincoln, NE 68509-5024  
402-471-2239  
402-471-5039  
[www.dol.state.ne.us](http://www.dol.state.ne.us)

**Nebraska Department of Revenue**

301 Centennial Mall South  
P.O. Box 94818  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4818  
402-471-2971  
[www.revenue.state.ne.us](http://www.revenue.state.ne.us)

**Nebraska Department of Roads**

1500 Hwy 2  
P.O. Box 94759  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4759  
402-471-4567  
(District offices in Lincoln, Omaha, Norfolk,  
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McCook, Ainsworth)  
[www.dor.state.ne.us](http://www.dor.state.ne.us)

Traffic Engineering Division  
NDOR State Headquarters  
P.O. Box 94759  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4759  
402-479-4594

**Nebraska Game and Parks Commission**

2200 N. 33<sup>rd</sup> St.  
P.O. Box 30370  
Lincoln, NE 68503-0370  
402-471-0641  
Fax: 402-471-1984  
(District offices in Alliance, Bassett,  
Kearney, Lincoln, Norfolk, North Platte)  
<http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us>

**Nebraska Liquor Control Commission**

301 Centennial Mall South  
P.O. Box 95046  
Lincoln, NE 68509-5046  
402-471-2571  
Fax: 402-471-2814  
[www.lcc.ne.gov/index.html](http://www.lcc.ne.gov/index.html)

**Nebraska Natural Resources Commission**

National Flood Plain Insurance Program  
P.O. Box 94876  
301 Centennial Mall South  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4876  
402-471-3934  
Fax: 402-471-3132  
[www.dnr.state.ne.us/commembers/commemb2.html](http://www.dnr.state.ne.us/commembers/commemb2.html)

**Nebraska Secretary of State**

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[corporate\\_inquiries@sos.ne.gov](mailto:corporate_inquiries@sos.ne.gov)  
[www.sos.state.ne.us/](http://www.sos.state.ne.us/)

**Nebraska Statewide Arboretum**

University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
206 Biochemistry Hall  
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Lincoln, NE 68583-0715  
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[www.arboretum.unl.edu](http://www.arboretum.unl.edu)

## Federal Government Agencies

### **Internal Revenue Service**

(Offices in Lincoln, North Platte, Norfolk,  
Scottsbluff)  
1313 Farnam St.  
Omaha, NE 68102  
402-221-3614  
[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

### **Farm Service Agency**

7131 A St.  
Lincoln, NE 68510  
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[www.fsa.usda.gov/ne](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ne)

### **National Agriculture Library**

Rural Information Center  
Beltsville, MD 20705-2351  
800-633-7701  
[www.nal.usda.gov/ric/](http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/)

### **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**

100 Centennial Mall North, Room 152  
Lincoln, NE 68508-3866  
402-437-5300  
[www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov)

### **USDA Rural Development**

100 Centennial Mall North, Room 152  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
402-437-5551  
[www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne)

### **United States Department of Agriculture**

1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250  
202-720-2791  
[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

### **United States Department of Justice**

950 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Civil Rights Division  
Disability Rights Section-NYAV  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
(Americans with Disabilities Assistance)  
800-514-0301  
[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada)

### **United States Department of Labor**

210 Walnut St., Ste. 643  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
515-284-4625  
[www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)

### **U.S. Department of Labor**

200 Constitution Ave, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20210  
(202) 219-6001  
[www.dol.gov/elaws](http://www.dol.gov/elaws)

### **United States Patent and Trademark Offices**

1-800-786-9199  
Email: [ustoinfo@uspto.gov](mailto:ustoinfo@uspto.gov)  
Web address: [www.uspto.gov/](http://www.uspto.gov/)

### **United States Small Business Administration**

11145 Mill Valley Road  
Omaha, NE 68154  
402-221-4691  
[www.sba.gov/ne](http://www.sba.gov/ne)

## Nebraska Public Colleges and Universities

### **Chadron State College**

1000 Main St.  
Chadron, NE 69337  
800-242-3766  
[www.csc.edu](http://www.csc.edu)

### **Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture**

RR3 Box 23A  
Curtis, NE 69025  
800-328-7847  
[www.ncta.unl.edu](http://www.ncta.unl.edu)

### **Peru State College**

600 Hoyt St.  
Peru, NE 68421  
800-742-4412  
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### **University of Nebraska at Kearney**

905 West 25<sup>th</sup> St.  
Kearney, NE 68849  
308-865-8441  
[www.unk.edu](http://www.unk.edu)

**University of Nebraska-Lincoln**  
332 Canfield Administration Building  
Lincoln, NE 68588  
402-472-7211  
[www.unl.edu](http://www.unl.edu)

**Wayne State College**  
1111 Main St.  
Wayne, NE 68787  
800-228-9972  
[www.wsc.edu](http://www.wsc.edu)

**University of Nebraska at Omaha**  
6001 Dodge St.  
Omaha, NE 68182  
402-554-2312  
[www.unomaha.edu](http://www.unomaha.edu)

## University of Nebraska Programs

Nebraska Business Development Centers,  
Business Assistance, Procurement and Manufacturing Assistance  
[www.nbdc.unomaha.edu](http://www.nbdc.unomaha.edu)

**University of Nebraska at Kearney**  
West Center Building, Room 135C  
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Kearney, NE 68849  
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402-472-1772  
<http://cari.unl.edu/index1024.shtml>

Also the contact for:  
NebraskaEDGE  
(Enhancing, Developing &  
Growing Entrepreneurs and  
Nebraska Cooperative  
Development Center)  
Center for Applied Rural  
Innovation  
402-472-4138

**Nebraska Land Bank**  
121 North Dewey, Ste. 208  
North Platte, NE 69101  
308-534-5115

**Lincoln Chamber Building**  
1135 M St., Ste. 200  
Lincoln, NE 68588  
402-472-3358

**Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship**  
CBA 209  
P.O. Box 880487  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0487  
402-472-3353  
Fax: 402-472-5855  
[www.cba.unl.edu/outreach/ent/](http://www.cba.unl.edu/outreach/ent/)

**Entrepreneur Shop**  
10868 West Dodge Road  
Omaha, NE 68154  
402-595-1158

**US Bank Building**  
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Scottsbluff, NE 69361  
308-635-7513

**Nebraska Food Processing Center**  
143 Filley Hall  
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[www.fpc.unl.edu](http://www.fpc.unl.edu)

**Wayne State College**  
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**Nebraska Rural Initiative**  
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Lincoln, NE 68583-0710  
402-472-2940  
<http://ruralinitiative.nebraska.edu/>

**Nebraska Center for Applied Rural Innovation**  
58 H. C. Filley Hall  
Lincoln, NE 68583-0947

**University of Nebraska – Lincoln  
Extension**

211 Agricultural Hall  
Lincoln, NE 68583  
402-472-2966  
<http://www.extension.unl.edu/>

Northeast Research and Extension Center  
601 E. Benjamin Ave., Ste. 104  
Norfolk, NE 68701  
402-370-4001  
<http://www.nerec.unl.edu/>

Panhandle Research and Extension Center  
4502 Avenue I  
Scottsbluff, NE 69361  
308-632-1230  
<http://www.panhandle.unl.edu/>

West Central Research and Extension Center  
461 West University Drive  
North Platte, NE 69101  
308-532-3611  
<http://www.westcentral.unl.edu/>

University of Nebraska Technology Park  
4701 Innovation Drive  
Lincoln, NE 68521-5330  
402-472-4200  
[www.unebtechpark.com/](http://www.unebtechpark.com/)

## Entrepreneur Education Programs

**Center for Rural Entrepreneurship**

317 S. 12th St., Ste. 200  
P.O. Box 83107  
Lincoln, NE 68501  
402-323-7339  
[www.ruraleship.org](http://www.ruraleship.org)

**Consortium for Entrepreneurship  
Education**

1601 West Fifth Avenue, #199  
Columbus, OH 43212  
[www.entre-ed.org](http://www.entre-ed.org)

**Corporation for Enterprise Development**

777 N. Capitol St. NE, Ste. 800  
Washington, D.C. 20002  
202-408-9788  
[www.cfed.org](http://www.cfed.org)

**Kauffman Foundation**

4801 Rockhill Road  
Kansas City, MO 64110  
816-932-1000  
[www.kauffman.org](http://www.kauffman.org)

**Marketing Education Resource Center**

1375 King Ave.  
P.O. Box 12279  
Columbus, OH 43212  
614-486-6708  
Fax: 614-486-1819  
[www.mark-ed.com](http://www.mark-ed.com)

**Nebraska Center for Entrepreneurship**

CBA 209  
P.O. Box 880847  
Lincoln, NE 68588  
402-472-3353  
Fax: 402-472-5855  
[www.cba.unl.edu/outreach/ent/](http://www.cba.unl.edu/outreach/ent/)

**Nebraska Council on Economic  
Education**

CBA 508G  
University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Omaha, NE 68182  
402- 554-2357  
[ecedweb.unomaha.edu/nebreced.htm](http://ecedweb.unomaha.edu/nebreced.htm)

**Nebraska EDGE  
(Enhancing, Developing and Growing  
Entrepreneurs)**

58 Filley Hall  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Lincoln, NE 68583

402-472-4138  
800-328-2851  
<http://nebraskaedge.unl.edu>



## Additional Resources

### **Center for Public Affairs Research**

University of Nebraska at Omaha  
6001 Dodge St.  
Omaha, NE 68182  
Phone: 402-554-2134  
Fax: 402-554-4946  
[www.unomaha.edu/cpar/sdcprogram.html](http://www.unomaha.edu/cpar/sdcprogram.html)

### **Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development**

University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
H.C. Filley Hall, Room 58  
Lincoln, NE 68583-0947  
Phone: 402-472-1772/800-328-2851  
Fax: 402-472-0688  
[www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/agecon/rural/](http://www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/agecon/rural/)

### **Center for Rural Research and Development**

University of Nebraska at Kearney  
Welch Hall  
19th Avenue and University Drive  
Kearney, NE 68849  
308-865-8199  
Fax: 308- 865-8153  
[www.unk.edu/acad/crrd/index.php?id=4396](http://www.unk.edu/acad/crrd/index.php?id=4396)

### **Existing Business Retention and Expansion Program**

University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Department of Agricultural Economics  
216 H. C. Filley Hall  
Lincoln, NE 68583-0922  
Phone: 402-472-2041  
Fax: 402-472-3460  
E-mail: [agec006@unlvm.unl.edu](mailto:agec006@unlvm.unl.edu)  
[agecon.unl.edu/](http://agecon.unl.edu/)

### **Joslyn Castle Institute for Sustainable Communities**

3902 Davenport St.  
Omaha, NE 68131  
Phone: 402-595-1902  
Fax: 402-595-1007  
[http://www.unl.edu/NN21/sc\\_contacts.html](http://www.unl.edu/NN21/sc_contacts.html)

### **Center for Rural Affairs**

145 Main St.  
P.O. Box 136  
Lyons, NE 68038  
402-687-2100  
Fax: 402-687-2200  
[www.cfra.org/](http://www.cfra.org/)

### **REAP (Rural Enterprise Assistance Project)**

P.O. Box 136  
Lyons, NE 68038  
402-687-2100  
[www.cfra.org/reap/default.htm](http://www.cfra.org/reap/default.htm)

### **Experience Works**

[www.experienceworks.org](http://www.experienceworks.org)

### **GROW Nebraska**

416 Center Ave.  
P.O. Box 7  
Holbrook, NE 68948  
888-476-9632  
[www.growneb.com](http://www.growneb.com)

### **Heartland Center for Leadership Development**

914 O St., Ste. 920  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
402-474-7672  
[www.heartlandcenter.info/contact.htm](http://www.heartlandcenter.info/contact.htm)

### **Invest Nebraska**

4701 Innovation Drive  
Lincoln, NE 68521  
402-472-2063  
Fax: 402-472-4203  
[www.investnebraska.com/index.sp](http://www.investnebraska.com/index.sp)

### **Kearney Area Ag Producers Alliance**

2115 Second Ave., Ste. B  
P.O. Box 1301  
Kearney, NE 68848  
308- 234-2712  
Fax: 308-234-2712  
[www.kaapa.com](http://www.kaapa.com)

### **Nebraska Ag Relations Council**

University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
104 Agriculture Communications Building  
P.O. Box 830918  
Lincoln, NE 68583-0918  
402- 472-2821

### **Nebraska Association of Bed & Breakfasts**

[www.nabb1.com](http://www.nabb1.com)

**Nebraska Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus**

Donna Goodier, NACVB President,  
Director, South Sioux City Visitors Bureau  
3900 Dakota Ave., Ste. 11  
South Sioux City, NE 68776  
402-494-1307 or 866-494-1307  
[www.visitnebraska.org](http://www.visitnebraska.org)

**Nebraska Business Development Center**

(District offices in Kearney, Lincoln, Omaha,  
North Platte, Norfolk, Scottsbluff, and  
Wayne)  
University of Nebraska at Omaha  
6001 Dodge St.  
Omaha, NE 68182  
402-595-2900  
[nbdc.unomaha.edu/](http://nbdc.unomaha.edu/)

**Nebraska Chamber of Commerce**

1320 Lincoln Mall  
P.O. Box 95128  
Lincoln, NE 68509  
402-474-4422  
[www.nechamber.com](http://www.nechamber.com)

**Nebraska Center for Productivity and Entrepreneurship**

University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
CBA 209  
P.O. Box 880487  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0487  
402-472-3353  
Fax: 402- 472-5855

**Nebraska Investment Finance Authority**

200 Commerce Court  
1230 O St.  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
402-434-3900 or 800-204-6432  
[www.nifa.org](http://www.nifa.org)

**Nebraska Logos, Inc.**

315 S. Ninth St.  
Ste. 207  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
402-435-5646  
800-333-6467

**Nebraska Legislature**

[www.unicam.state.ne.us/senators/senators.htm](http://www.unicam.state.ne.us/senators/senators.htm)

**Nebraska Microenterprise Partnership Fund**

312 Main St., #8  
P.O. Box 99  
Walthill, NE 68067  
402-846-5757  
[www.nebbiz.org](http://www.nebbiz.org)

**Nebraska Planning and Zoning Association**

P.O. Box 94731  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4731  
402-471-3119 or 800-426-6505  
Fax: 402-471-3778  
[crd.neded.org/npza/contact.html](http://crd.neded.org/npza/contact.html)

**Nebraska Travel Association**

[www.nebraskatravelassociation.com](http://www.nebraskatravelassociation.com)

**Nebraska Winery & Grape Growers Association**

[www.nebraskawines.com](http://www.nebraskawines.com)

**Partnership for Rural Nebraska**

P.O. Box 1033  
754 West Sommer Ave.  
Chadron, NE 69337  
308-432-5359  
Fax: 308-432-6129  
[cari.unl.edu/prn1/](http://cari.unl.edu/prn1/)

**SCORE--Service Corps of Retired Executives**

11145 Mill Valley Road  
Omaha, NE 68154  
402-221-4691  
[www.score.org](http://www.score.org)

**Tree City USA and Community Forestry**

Nebraska Forest Service  
8015 West Center Road  
Omaha, NE 68124-3175  
402-444-7804  
Fax: 402-444-6430  
[www.nfs.unl.edu/CFP.HTM](http://www.nfs.unl.edu/CFP.HTM)

**U.S. Small Business Administration**

Business Development Program  
U.S. Small Business Administration  
11145 Mill Valley Road  
Omaha, NE 68154  
402- 221-4691  
Fax: 402- 221-3680  
[www.sba.gov/ne/](http://www.sba.gov/ne/)

## Tourism Contacts

### National and Regional Organizations

#### **American Bus Association**

700 13th St. NW, Ste. 575  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-842-1645  
800-283-2877  
Fax: 202-842-0850  
Email: [abainfo@buses.org](mailto:abainfo@buses.org)  
[www.buses.org](http://www.buses.org)

#### **Bank Travel**

Teresa Burton  
P.O. Box 129  
Salem, OH 44460-0129  
330-332-3841  
Fax: 330-337-1118  
[tburton@glamer.com](mailto:tburton@glamer.com)  
[www.banktravel.com](http://www.banktravel.com)

#### **CenStates TTRA Chapter**

Denise Miller,  
Strategic Marketing & Research  
12220 Meridian St., Ste. 100  
Carmel, IN 46032-6991  
317-574-7700  
Fax: 317-574-7777  
Email: [dmiller@smari.com](mailto:dmiller@smari.com)

#### **Glamer**

Gini Dolence  
P.O. Box 129  
Salem, OH 44460  
800-628-0993  
Fax: 330-337-1118  
Email: [sell@glamer.com](mailto:sell@glamer.com)  
[www.glamer.com/](http://www.glamer.com/)

#### **International Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus**

2025 M St. NW, Ste. 500  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-296-7888  
Fax: 202-296-7889  
Email: [info@iacvb.org](mailto:info@iacvb.org)  
[www.iacvb.org](http://www.iacvb.org)

#### **National Tour Association**

546 E. Main St.  
Lexington, KY 40508  
800-682-8866  
Fax: 859-226-4404  
[www.ntaonline.com](http://www.ntaonline.com)

#### **National Park Service—Midwest Region**

601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha NE 68102-4226  
402-661-1736  
Email: [Ernest\\_Quintana@nps.gov](mailto:Ernest_Quintana@nps.gov)  
[www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/contactus/regions/midwest.html](http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/contactus/regions/midwest.html)

#### **National Scenic Byways Program**

Federal Highway Administration  
National Scenic Byways Program  
400 Seventh St. SW  
Room 3232, HEPN-50  
Washington, DC 20590  
202-366-4649 or 800-429-9297  
Fax: 202-366-7660  
[www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org)

Dennis Adams,  
Program Manager  
FHWA National Scenic  
Byways Program  
800-429-9297, option 3  
Email:  
[dennis.adams@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:dennis.adams@fhwa.dot.gov)  
[www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org)

#### **National Trails System Office Salt Lake City**

324 S. State St., Ste. 250  
P.O. Box 45155  
Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155  
801-539-4095  
[www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/trails/nat\\_trails.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/trails/nat_trails.shtml)

#### **Niobrara National Scenic River & Missouri National Recreational River**

Paul Hedren, Superintendent  
114 N. Sixth St.  
P.O. Box 591  
O'Neill, NE 68763  
402-336-3970  
Email: [niob\\_administration@nps.gov](mailto:niob_administration@nps.gov)  
Email: [mnrr\\_administration@nps.gov](mailto:mnrr_administration@nps.gov)  
Email: [paul\\_hedren@nps.gov](mailto:paul_hedren@nps.gov)  
[www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/contactus/regions/midwest.html](http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/contactus/regions/midwest.html)

**Travel Industry Association of America**

1100 New York Ave. NW  
Ste. 450  
Washington, DC 20005-3934  
202-408-8422  
Fax: 202-408-1255  
[www.tia.org](http://www.tia.org)

**Travel & Tourism Research Association**

P.O. Box 2133  
Boise, ID 83701  
208-429-9511  
Fax: 208-429-9512  
Email: [info@ttra.com](mailto:info@ttra.com)  
[www.ttra.com](http://www.ttra.com)



# Worksheets



## Self-Evaluation/Family Evaluation

### Is Agritourism Right for You and Are You Right for Agritourism?

Each family member who will be affected by a new enterprise should answer the following questions as realistically and honestly as possible. Compare your results. Look for areas of agreement. Be aware of potential conflicts. Questions included here can help you evaluate your strengths and weaknesses.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Have you been aspiring to start a new business?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have a specific business idea you would like to see become a reality?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Will this business improve your quality of life? *Make sure it aligns with your goals and values.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Will you be happy if you don't earn a lot of money?  
*You may have less desire to be rich than to "do your own thing". Typically, entrepreneurs make less money than when working for someone else. Their real income is derived from doing what they know is right.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you want to be the boss? To take on more responsibility? *If so, you must be good at undertaking and finishing projects.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you enjoy working with people?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you well organized?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you enthusiastic?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you a risk taker?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you happy working long hours?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you creative?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you decisive?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you determined?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you good at math?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are you able to concentrate?



\_\_\_\_\_ Are you self-confident?

### **Business Skills**

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you have a strong agricultural background?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you have sales skills?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you have customer relation's experience?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you have knowledge of business laws?

\_\_\_\_\_ Are you a good judge of character?  
*You'll need employees with skills and talent you may lack.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Can you see how the pieces fit together?  
*As a small business owner, you wear many different hats: finance, marketing, accounting, bookkeeping, human relations and more. It is necessary to see how these pieces fit together.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Can you take criticism and rejection?  
*How you handle yourself and how you proceed is important.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you have managerial experience?

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you have computer skills?

### **Assessing Your Strengths and Weaknesses**

The drive to succeed is vitally important to keeping a business going. If the new enterprise is a wrong fit, and you are not in love with the idea of the business, you may as well not even open the doors. Answering "no" to some questions on the **Self Evaluation Worksheet** may indicate some shortcomings that need improvement. Training or advance preparation to help meet these needs will increase the prospects of being successful.

## Identify Your Values

Ask yourself and members of your team, what being “successful” means, or recall a critical turning point in your life when you were faced with a serious tradeoff. What values guided you?

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In your current operation, what does “**successful**” mean to you? *Rank in order of importance with 1=most important and 8=least important.*

- Paying down expenses
- Putting money away for future
- Taking pride in the products and/or services you produced and offered
- Creating a place for the next generation to farm
- Taking time to rest...vacation
- Being able to save for down times
- Creating a beautiful landscape or environment
- Working outdoors

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How satisfied are you with your existing farm business?

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What type of life do you want to lead? (Personal values)

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What are important financial considerations for you? (Economic values)

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What role does the environment play in your life? (Environmental values)

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How do you define your community and why is it important? (Community values)

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Values identified by individuals:

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Values shared as a family:

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## Identify Your Goals

This worksheet may be the most difficult to complete because emotions are involved and communications among family members may not always be clear and distinct. All ideas and goals established in this worksheet must be shared and understood by all members of the family. Be realistic and honest with yourself and your family.

Goals you expect to achieve by adding new enterprises.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Short-term goals for the next 1–5 years.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Long-term goals (10 year +).

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Which of these goals are most important for your family's wellbeing and business success?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Which short-term goals will help attain long-term goals?

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What are your expectations for inviting the public onto the farm and working with them?

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### **Income Expectations**

What should the new enterprise provide in terms of income and family employment during the next three years?

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During the next five years?

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Sales goals:

Our first year goal: \$\_\_\_\_\_ total sales

Our second year goal: \$\_\_\_\_\_ total sales

Our third year goal: \$\_\_\_\_\_ total sales

What are the most important goals, even if it prevents you from reaching other goals?

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What are your top goals? Remember just because these are important or high priority doesn't mean they need to occupy most of your time.

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## Family Resource Worksheet

List family members who want to be involved in the new enterprise.

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For production, management, and marketing what are unique skills and abilities and what are the needs of each segment?

Production	Management	Marketing

Names of people or family members and job duties who will help in the areas of:

Production	Management	Marketing

What is the experience and educational background for each person? What are their strongest assets? Where are areas in which they can improve? Beside family members, you may also want to list other paid assistants, such as an accountant, attorney, and lender/financer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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## Community Resource Worksheet

Review these questions with your local or area Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitor's Bureau, small business groups, and economic development organizations.

List membership in community business organizations, and farm and ranch organizations.

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List involvement with organizations that support locally owned businesses, such the Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitor's Bureau.

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### **Organizations You Should Consider Joining.**

Small business programs that support entrepreneurs in the community.

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Businesses and local organizations that support your new enterprise.

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Partnerships that can be formed to help support your new enterprise.

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Community seasonal activities, fairs, or festivals that support farm and ranch enterprises.

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Lodging and dining facilities, medical facilities, and security services in your area.

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## **Physical Resource Map**

Sketch the physical layout of your business and locations of non-moveable objects. Is there adequate access? Will guests have to drive to get to various sites? Is there drinking water and restrooms at appropriate locations? Is there enough space for privacy and solitude? Look at the aesthetics and topography.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a hand-drawn sketch of a business's physical layout. The box occupies the majority of the page below the introductory text.

List what land resources you have (number of acres, leased, state-owned and private property, including perennial crop areas or pastures, riparian zones).

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1. Climate-Consider how weather patterns, temperature, etc. will affect the types of activities you might provide.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temperature variations												
Avg. Temp.												
Precipitation												
Snow Cover (Depth)												
<b>Growing Season</b>												

2. Developments and improvements (buildings, permanent fences, corrals, equipment, windmills, silos, roads and trails). Condition and adequacy of the road to the farm or ranch.

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3. Other attractions-List those items that might enhance your operation to visitors, such as wildlife, streams, ponds, fishing, livestock, proximity to natural or man-made points of interest, historical, etc

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4. Areas that should be kept off limits-water areas, buildings, equipment, etc.

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## Field of Dreams and Ideas of Potential Enterprises

There is no right or wrong way to brainstorm. Larger groups in a relaxed atmosphere will aid in generating a free flow of ideas, which is an effective way to identify the best enterprise that fits many people's needs and desires. A light-hearted approach tends to stretch people's minds and therefore get the "creative juices" flowing. Laughing is encouraged but criticism is not. Ideas that first seem silly may ultimately prove to be good or lead to very good ideas. Keeping that in mind consider the following:

Based on my current understanding of agritourism, I believe the following enterprises are options for my operation:

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Rank these ideas and keep the rest for your records, as they may be potential enterprises in case the first one does not work.

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Cash-out	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Insurance												
Rent												
Salaries												
Staff wages												
Legal												
Electricity												
Maintenance												
Advertising												
Permits, fees, licenses												
<b>Totals</b>												
Net return Cash in minus cash out												

Add the total of net returns for each month to give you the net return for the year.

---

Break-even volume is defined as the minimum production volume necessary to cover your cost of production.

Service or product \_\_\_\_\_

Annual fixed costs (overhead expenses)

a= \_\_\_\_\_

Variable costs/unit

b= \_\_\_\_\_

Market price/unit

c= \_\_\_\_\_

Break-even volume

$a/c-b=$  \_\_\_\_\_ units/yr

Estimated sales volume

= \_\_\_\_\_

Goals

= \_\_\_\_\_

Does this help you meet yours goals? \_\_\_\_\_

## Development of the “5 P’s”

The five “P’s” of marketing—product, price, place, promotion and people—are the focus for identifying the marketing alternatives for agritourism enterprises. Of course, these elements are centered on the customer. On this worksheet, record marketing ideas that can be further developed.

Product—(Quality, value-added)

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Price—(Cost plus profit, local prices)

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Place—(Places of sale)

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Promotion—(Media, brochures, personal)

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People-Customer/Target Market—(Neighbors, friends, church groups)

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Maximum number of guests (consider area population): \_\_\_\_\_

Typical price and price range:

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Price relative to comparable:

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Are your prices realistic and attainable? \_\_\_\_\_

## Who Is My Customer?

One real market advantage of agritourism is that potential clients are numerous and making your operation unique is not a far reach. This section on Marketing will further help you refine this description:

Who is the most likely customer to come to your place?

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Where does this person live? (In-state or out-of-state/country)

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How far will they travel? \_\_\_\_\_ miles

What is their primary mode of transportation?

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How involved do you believe your guests want to be (self-guided versus guided, etc.)?

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What is the party size and composition?

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What are guests' hobbies or interests (Horseback riding, photography, hunting, etc.)?

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What is your customer's income range? This may vary.

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Why will he or she become a customer in the first place (relaxation, recreation, etc.)?

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Where do they access information (Internet, newspaper, trade shows, etc.)?

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What can you do to keep this customer coming back? Remember what you have to make the experience unique.

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## Plan of Operations

### Current Monthly Schedule

Activity	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Ex. Branding				X								

### Current Daily Schedule

Activity	Midnight – 6am	Morning 6am – 10 am	Midday	Afternoon	Evening	Night

### Projected Months of Operation:

- Jan     
  Feb     
  March     
  April     
  May     
  June  
 July     
  Aug     
  Sept     
  Oct     
  Nov     
  Dec

**Days of operation**

Sunday  Monday  Tuesday  Wednesday  Thursday  Friday  Saturday

Business hours of operation? \_\_\_\_\_

When are busiest times of Day? \_\_\_\_\_ Week \_\_\_\_\_?  
 Month \_\_\_\_\_?

**New Monthly Enterprise Requirements**

Activity	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

**New Daily Enterprise Requirements**

Activity	Midnight – 6am	Morning 6am – 10 am	Midday	Afternoon	Evening	Night

Notice any time conflicts and make sure that arrangements can be made.

Overall, does the new enterprise appear to be compatible with your current operation?

## Revisiting Goals

The next exercise takes you back to your original goals and asks you to evaluate whether or not your chosen enterprise will satisfy your personal, family, and business goals and objectives.

Go back and review your goals, and answer the following questions:

1. Does my selected enterprise meet all my goals?  
Y or N (yes = skip to 7, no = go to 2)
  2. Does my enterprise meet any of my goals?  
Y or N (yes = go to 3, no = skip to 5)
  3. Can I adjust my enterprise to match my goals?  
Y or N (yes = go to 4, no = go to 5)
  4. I can adjust my enterprise to match my goals by
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Now Go to 7

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5. Look at the following options and determine if a different level of involvement can change the compatibility of the enterprise and your goals:

- Contract with a tour company/guide or other complimentary business to do part of the work (such as advertising and transportation), while you do the rest.
- Lease a portion of your property to a tour company/guide service to take care of everything.

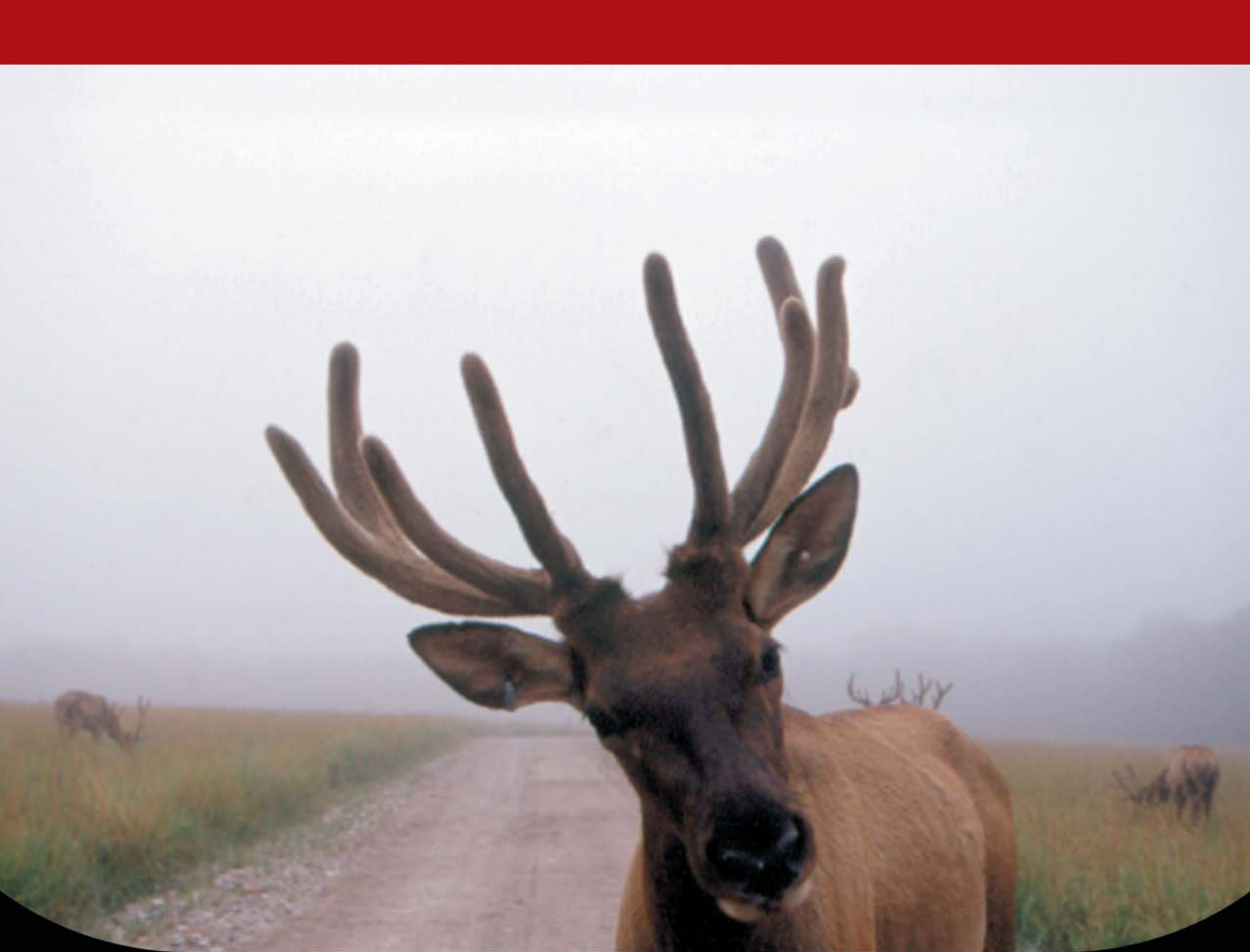
Does either of these options make the enterprise meet my goals? (yes = go to 7, no = go to 6)

6. Go back and evaluate a different enterprise type.
  7. My selected enterprise is
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8. Does the existing business allow for growth?
  9. Does growth meet values, goals, and resources of current operation?
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