
SERVICEMEMBER AGRICULTURE
VOCATION EDUCATION (SAVE)

2020-2025

STRATEGIC PLAN

DEVELOPED BASED ON INPUT FROM THE MEMBERS AND
STAKEHOLDERS OF THE SAVE ORGANIZATION

REPORT BY SUSAN METZGER



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A WORD FROM THE CEO

To Our Stakeholders:

SAVE has undergone a remarkable evolution in the past five years as we've pursued our vision to serve as a sustainable model for hands-on agribusiness training and integrated behavioral health therapy for veterans and their family members. Offering our unique brand built around four equally strong commitments to our students, community, partners, and the environment we are embarking on the next phase of our journey.

During the next five years, we will improve our financial position, enhance student training and care, improve our academic delivery, implement systems that facilitate better communication with all stakeholders, build a an even stronger partner network, and evaluate the impact of our work.

In order to achieve success, we must consistently work to achieve our goals through integrated initiatives that place a high priority on moving us forward on multiple fronts simultaneously and collaboratively. We believe these objectives provide us a clear line of sight toward our vision and create value across the entire organization.

I want to personally thank the many stakeholders who have helped us achieve our past results through their direct engagement and contribution. I ask for your continued support for the next five years as we forge ahead with our groundbreaking mission.

Sincerely,

Craig Bowser



DR. CRAIG BOWSER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

OUR MISSION

*To be a nationally-recognized
farming, ranching and
agribusiness training and
healing program for veterans
and others*

OUR VISION

*To serve as a sustainable model for
hands-on agriculture and
agribusiness training and
education, integrated with
behavioral health therapy, with an
emphasis on servicemembers,
veterans, and their families.*

ENHANCING OUR VISION

Our vision is a clear, specific, compelling picture of what we aim to look like within the next five years. Following are a few key metrics that will define our success. These statements enhance our vision and define key results yet to be accomplished and the specific behaviors we must display to be successful.

SUSTAINABLE MODEL



SAVE expands the geography and acreage where training is offered.
SAVE is self-sustainable.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION



Throughput of 100-200 students per year, per location.
Training and education focus on sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices.
At least 80% of SAVE graduates are still working in an agribusiness-related career five years after program completion.

INTEGRATED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH THERAPY



Provide tangible necessary outcomes for veterans and others struggling with both seen and unseen wounds through therapy and camaraderie.

Provide the opportunity to be an important integral part of a working team.
Integrated therapy may occur through a variety of approaches including behavioral therapy, equine therapy, agricultural or horticultural therapy, apiary therapy, or other opportunities for integrated therapy. We will continue to research and explore the approaches that meet the needs of our students and program participants.



WHO WE ARE

Our values are a visible statement of who we are and what we stand for. They serve as our behavioral compass. We believe that our commitment to live out our values, mission, and vision make us a premier agricultural training organization.

WHO WE SERVE

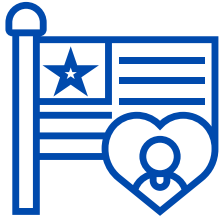
Our priority beneficiaries are servicemembers, veterans and their families. As part of G.I. bill eligibility and in the interest of transitioning from service, we are broadening our customers to include all individuals with a passion for agriculture who can benefit from our services.

WHERE WE OPERATE

We currently operate in Kansas near the Ft. Riley U.S. Army military installation and Kansas State University. We deliver our services through three primary locations – a business office in downtown Manhattan, KS, a beekeeping supply operation and shop in Manhattan, and a 308-acre farm near Riley, KS. We are working to develop a model for agricultural training that can be employed throughout the United States.



OUR STRENGTHS



COMPELLING MISSION AND VISION

Our mission and vision are our purpose and a reflection of our culture and values. Our mission and vision are compelling and inspire others to join us.

HANDS-ON TRAINING WITH EXPERIENCED INSTRUCTORS

Our students receive hands-on training from experienced agricultural producers on our own diversified farm – a combination that is one of our key differentiators.



TEAMWORK AND COMMITTED BOARD

Our employees, interns, volunteers, and board members are united in service to each other and to the organization. We are committed to improving the lives of our team members so we can improve the lives of others and the future of farming and ranching.

OPPORTUNITY FOR HEALING

In partnership with Konza Prairie Community Health (FQHC), our program participants have access to services aimed to improve their physical, cognitive, psychological, spiritual, and social well-being. Our unique partnership offers the opportunity to build evidence on the role of farming as an integrated component of a successful behavioral health program. Our programs utilize VA Gold Standard evidence based treatments that allow us to engage in research and measure outcomes of success.



INDUSTRY SUPPORT

Our partnerships with the agriculture industry allows us to expand our programming and build networks for our students that will enhance their future careers and job placement.

OUR STRENGTHS

“SAVE obviously, the concept of SAVE is exceptional. Training folks, taking folks, helping folks become a valuable member of the agribusiness community in a short period of time.”

“SAVE at its best is the passion and the heart behind it because it's definitely there. And I would say, just from my perspective, the best thing ever is we've probably prevented suicides and we've helped people find mission and purpose.”

“I'm proud thinking about how some of the folks have turned their lives around because of the program and how successful some people are in beginning their agribusiness careers.”

Anonymous quotes from members, participants, and stakeholders of SAVE Organization



OUR CORE VALUES

SERVICE ORIENTED

Effective service puts the needs of our Nation's servicemembers, veterans, the agricultural community, and their families first.

TEAMWORK

When we respect and combine our talents, perspectives, and values into our services, our team has the greatest impact and is most fulfilled.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Matching our strengths with the assets of others, we can more effectively deliver our programs and serve our communities.

PROGRESS

Focusing on our strengths, we will continuously make progress towards an effective future built on our imagination and innovative purposes.

OUR CORE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO DATE

HANDS ON TRAINING

Training and preparing servicemembers and veterans about agriculture. Hands-on experience is provided in both crop production practices and animal husbandry, including planting, harvesting, crop selection, and livestock management practices.

FARM TOURS

Delivering comprehensive, weekly farm tour programs allowing participants to learn about farm business planning and financial management and creating a network with agricultural manufacturers, farm service providers, and food processing organizations.

BEEKEEPING

Operating a model beekeeping training program, in partnership with the University of Montana's Master Beekeeping program. A niche agricultural endeavor, beekeeping is critical to the Nation's food supply and commercial operators are in need of an expanded workforce.

INTERNSHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Providing internships and connecting aspiring farm owners with experienced mentors to explore succession possibilities and experience hands-on learning in exchange for farm labor activities.

RAISING AWARENESS

Increasing awareness of the behavioral and physical health concerns and the challenges our Nation's servicemembers, veterans, and families experience when transitioning to civilian communities.



OUR HISTORY

The concept of the SAVE organization grew out of a conversation between SAVE's founder and his daughter on October 20, 2012. Drawing on experiences with soldiers at Fort Riley participating in a greenhouse project while receiving therapy, the two envisioned a training farm for veterans and transitioning servicemembers that provided integrated therapy for those suffering from both visible and invisible combat wounds.

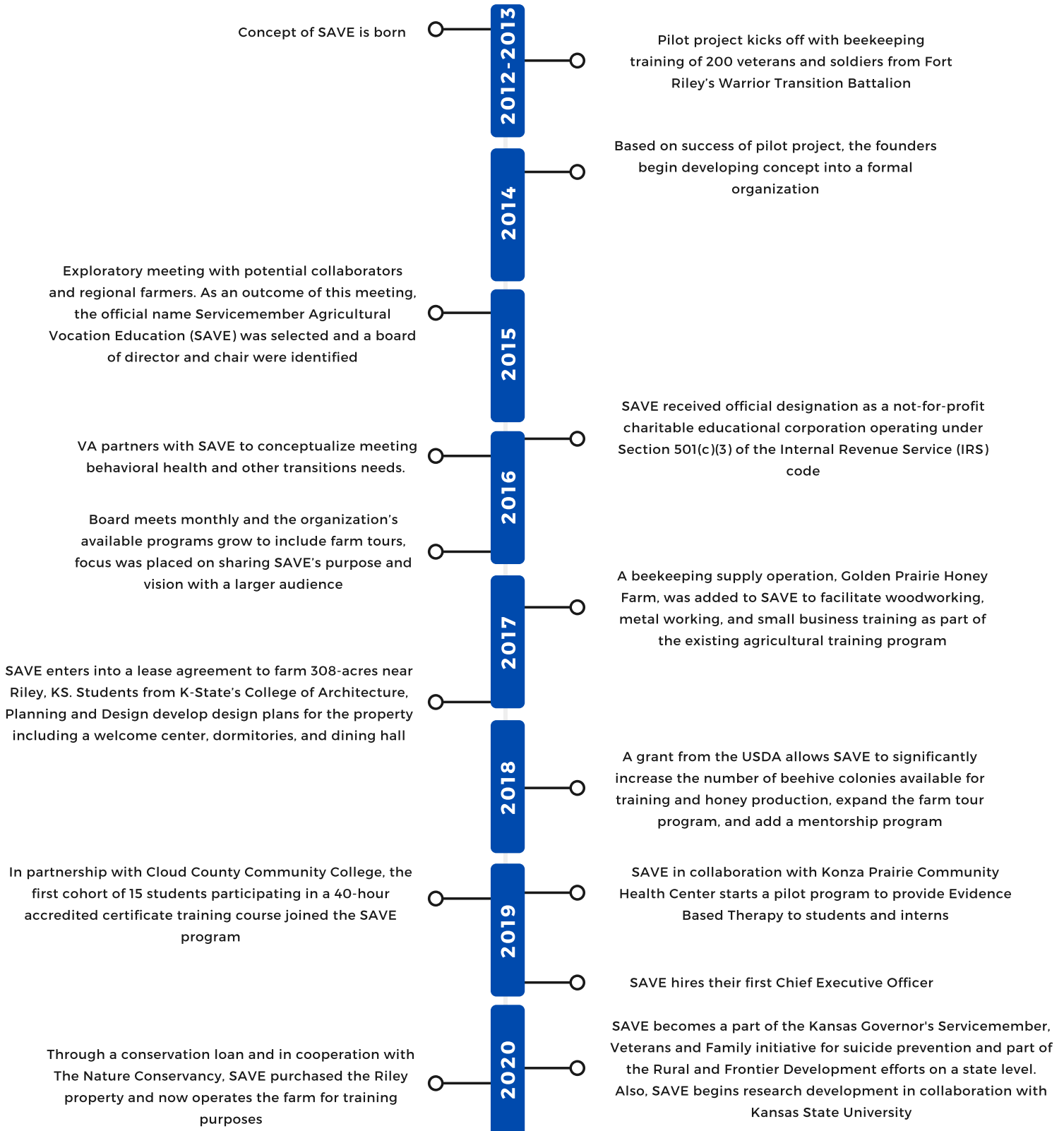
The first few years of our organization saw a pilot training project with veterans and soldiers from Fort Riley's Warrior Transition Battalion, development of an initial board structure and bylaws, and official designation as a not-for-profit charitable educational corporation operating under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) code.

Growth and successes of SAVE during our first five years include launching Golden Prairie Honey Farm, a beekeeping supply operation, the award of multiple federal grants, significantly increasing the number of beehive colonies, expanding partners and collaborators, hiring a Chief Executive Officer, and graduating the first cohort from a 40-hour accredited certificate training course. In 2020, SAVE celebrated a significant milestone – the purchase of 308-acres of farmland for future hands-on training.

SERVICEMEMBER AGRICULTURE
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2020-2025

OUR HISTORY



OUR IMPACT

SAVE is a unique intervention with a valuable mission that easily engages community and organizational support. Agricultural education combined with therapeutic support offers a holistic approach to transitioning veterans while at the same time addressing an increasing shortage in the agricultural workforce. SAVE is helping provide a meaningful way of life and potential hands-on healing for hundreds of participants and has the potential to continue its success.

K-State Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation





467

individuals participating in at least one SAVE class or hands-on training opportunity from 2016-2019

275

individuals including servicemembers and veterans who attended our bee boot camp from 2017-2019

SITUATION & NEED

There are almost 20 million veterans in the United States and most of them live in rural areas. According to the Department of Defense (DoD), nearly 200,000 servicemembers are expected to separate from active duty each year and approximately 1,300 veterans return to civilian life each day.

Many of these veterans and transitioning servicemembers suffer from visible and invisible wounds of war. Approximately 20 percent of the veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are struggling with behavioral health concerns, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), depression, and substance use disorders. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that approximately 22 veterans die from suicide each day.

On average, U.S. farmers are aging, with more than a third over the age of 65. With many of these farms in the last generation of family ownership, there is a need for a skilled

agricultural workforce to address this farm succession challenge. It is estimated that despite advances in technology, more than one million additional workers are needed to fulfill jobs in agriculture and food production.

According to the Department of Labor, a significant number of existing and transitioning veterans are interested in careers in farming or agriculture related occupations. Many American military veterans come from rural areas. In fact, about 45 percent of returning veterans grew up in rural America and many express a desire to return to those rural communities.

Most American veterans are highly skilled due to their essential military assignments. All that is needed is to compliment those skills with agricultural education to be able to fulfill a vital role - growing our Nation's safe and nourishing food supply.

20M

veterans in the United States, most living in rural areas, many with limited resources and income. About 45% of returning veterans grew up in rural America and many express a desire to return to those rural communities

200,000

servicemembers are expected to separate from active duty each year and approximately 1,300 veterans return to civilian life each day

20%

of the veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are struggling with behavioral health concerns, such as PTSD, TBI, depression, and substance use disorders

22

veterans die from suicide each day

>1/3

of U.S. farmers are over the age of 65 and many farms are in the last generation of family ownership

1M

additional workers are needed to fulfill jobs in agriculture and food production, despite advances in technology

THE NEXT 5 YEARS

OUR PRIORITIES

We see that there is a significant need for the type of hands-on agricultural training that SAVE provides outside of Kansas. In partnership with other Land Grant Universities, military installations, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and The Nature Conservancy, we are exploring the opportunity to expand our reach nationally by developing and delivering our model in pilot areas in other states.

We remain committed to and focused on our primary beneficiaries – servicemembers, veterans, and their families – but also recognize the need and demand for agricultural training for many others. We are finding more ways for other individuals with an interest in agriculture to access our resources.

Included within the action items identified in each of the following priorities is a demonstrated commitment to empower servicemembers, veterans, and their families seeking a new purpose and transition back into civilian communities through hands-on training in careers in agriculture and agribusiness.

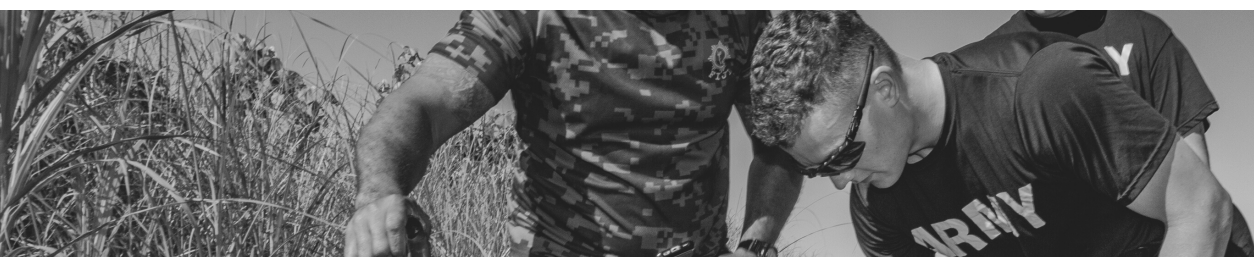
OUR PRIORITIES

- 1** Enhancing student recruitment and focus on student care
- 2** Strengthening our financial and operational capabilities
- 3** Improving our academic instruction and delivery
- 4** Implementing systems to improve internal communication and external marketing and outreach
- 5** Building a partner and volunteer program that focuses on recruiting and retaining new and current partners and volunteers
- 6** Developing clear ways to measure, evaluate, and communicate the impact of our work

ENHANCING STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND FOCUS ON STUDENT CARE

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

- Focus recruitment and training on our core clientele – servicemembers, veterans, and their families.
- Leverage local social media and traditional media outlets such as radio and advertisements to significantly expand messaging and recruitment.
- Develop a comprehensive list of contacts to assist actively with recruitment including SAVE program alumni, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Kansas Department of Labor, Kansas National Guard Public Affairs Office (PAO), Ft. Riley Soldier for Life program, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and more. Continuously add to and maintain recruitment contact list.
- Identify at least two veteran-focused career transition events and one general agricultural training opportunity fair per year to attend in person and promote our programs.
- Engage with military and agricultural high school programs including Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) and FFA.
- Continue to offer all of our program participants access to behavioral health.



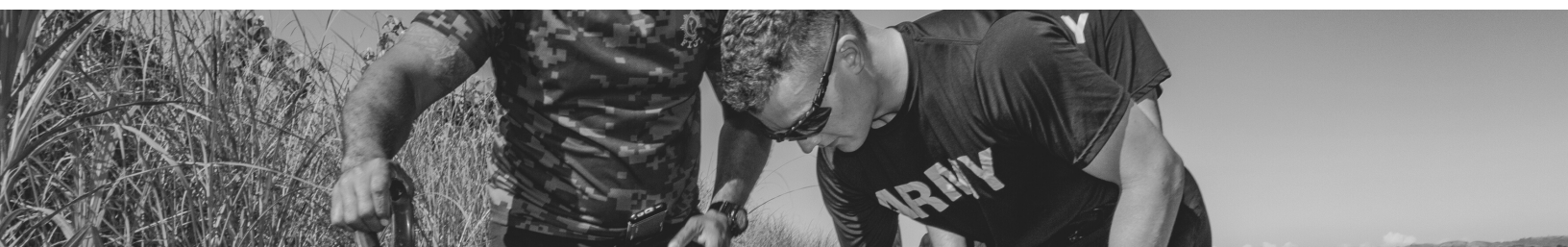
ENHANCING STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND FOCUS ON STUDENT CARE

- Formalize Academic Program Manager position description of current AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer. Consider permanent paid position to fulfill these responsibilities.
- Conduct post-graduation interviews with all SAVE program participants to assess organization strengths and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Engage our program alumni in future student recruitment and as part of the SAVE Ambassador Program.

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

- Demand for program results in higher number of applicants than admitted students.
- Program admits 100 students per year.
- Each student receives personalized care to address housing, transportation, financial aid, and behavioral health to maximize their success in the program.
- Students are empowered to successfully transition into agriculture careers, finding purpose and achieving fulfilling lives.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



STRENGTHENING OUR FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

- Continue to monitor and forecast our budget while emphasizing reduced expenditures.
- Form and activate a Development Committee comprised of board members and external partners (if necessary). Committee will report at each board meeting and provide a monthly written summary of activities and recommendations to all board members.
- Develop a formal Finance and Development plan to accompany this overarching strategic plan. The Finance and Development plan will be revisited by the CEO, in partnership with the Development Committee. Place immediate emphasis on enhanced donor recruitment.
- Update SAVE's Business Plan.
- Proactively seek federal cost-share and agricultural relief programs such as the Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program and Emergency Assistance for Livestock (ELAP) payments.
- Increase donors of all types, with an emphasis on large-scale donors who give more strategically to their own objectives and in support of our mission.
- Increase and diversify the range of revenue streams to reduce dependency on external grants and to maximize our effectiveness.



STRENGTHENING OUR FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES

- Strategically pursue external grant opportunities that leverage our core programs and mission.
- Build out the sales and services portion of our revenue through commodity and livestock sales from our farm property and Golden Prairie Honey Farm products.
- Develop a financing and business plan for the acquisition of the Plinsky ranch near Salina, including the costs for land managers, livestock, taxes, and farm inputs, prior to entering into an agreement for the property. Present plan to board for review and approval.
- Continue the practice of providing routine, detailed treasurer reports to the board to ensure transparency and allow feedback to improve our financial position.
- Seek board review for all hired personnel and engage board members on hiring committees.
- Hire a Human Resources Director to oversee personnel recruitment, screening, training, and employee relations.
- Develop a plan for the hiring of additional priority personnel including a clinic director and marketing and communications specialist.

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY



STRENGTHENING OUR FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES

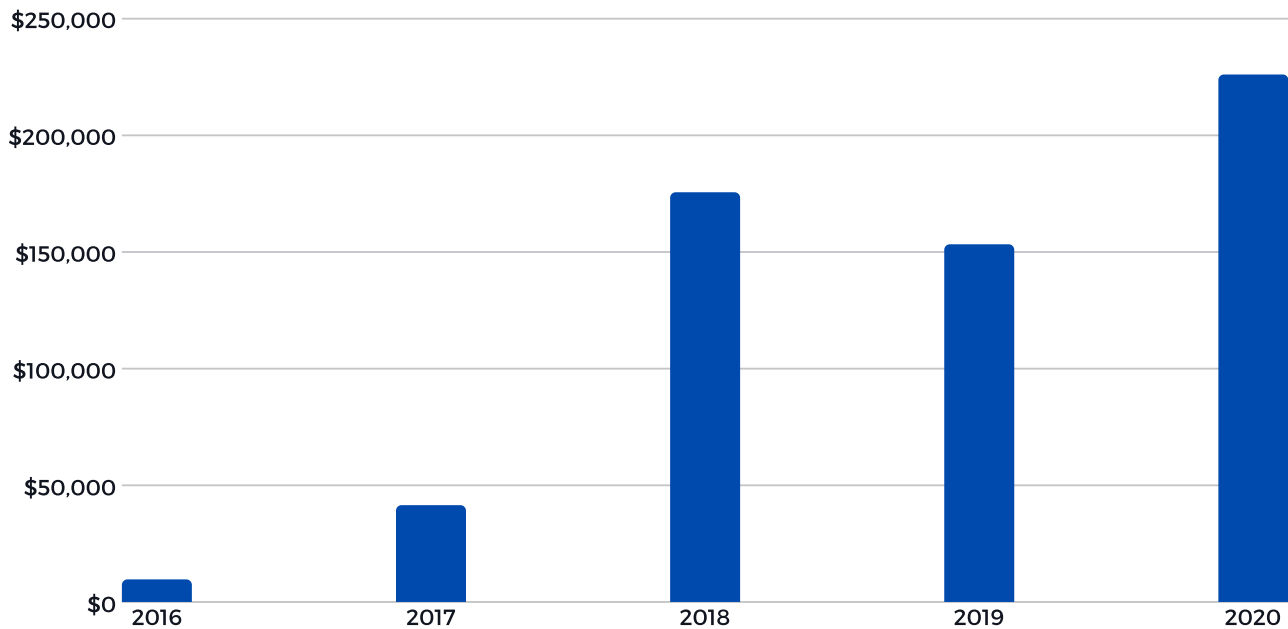
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- We have a thriving development strategy with diverse financial resources such as endowments and corporate sponsorships.
- We meet our 90-day cash reserve goal.
- We stabilize our employee and volunteer turnover.

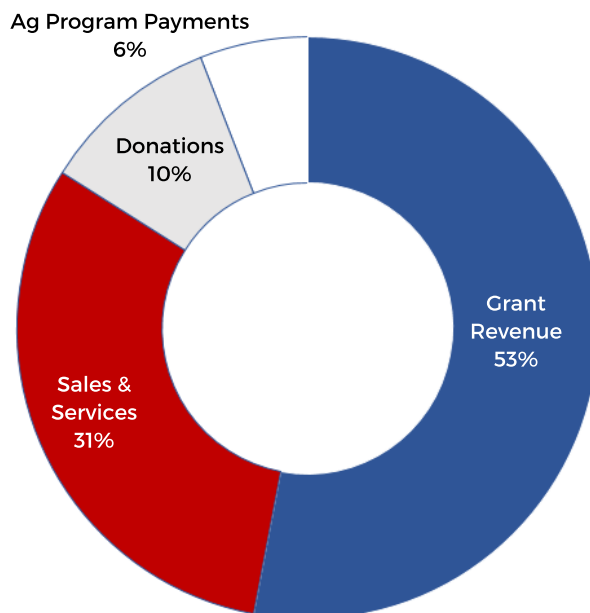


FINANCIALS

Change in Revenue Since Founding



Revenue Sources, 2020



In 2021, we plan to increase revenues by approximately 10% and maintain a 5% margin. Our goal is to build a 90-day operating cash reserve and shift our revenue mix away from such a reliance on grant programs. We are striving to ensure our programs are self-sustaining after the initial pilot and launch of the honey-bottling program. By 2025, we aim to balance our revenue sources with 50% earned income, 25% public investments, and 25% individual and corporate giving.



IMPROVING OUR ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION AND DELIVERY

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

- Maintain partnerships with educational institutions such as Cloud County Community College to provide structured classroom curriculum.
- Maintain partnership with Manhattan Area Technical College (MATC) for access to specialized welding, mechanical, and carpentry training.
- Provide professional educational training for volunteer instructors to ensure consistent delivery of our curriculum.
- Reduce dependence on volunteer instructors and increase the number of paid instructors.
- Uphold our focus on hands-on agricultural training, a key differentiator of our organization, while exploring alternative coursework delivery options.
- Collaborate with Kansas State University Global Campus and other professional education platforms to provide our students with a virtual alternative to coursework. Explore dual tract model for students, one including in-person classroom instruction and hands-on experiences across a calendar year, and one including virtual coursework with a focused, short-term field experience. Recruitment priority will be placed on in-person classroom instruction.



IMPROVING OUR ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION AND DELIVERY

- Identify opportunities to provide integrated behavioral therapy and peer support for those students electing to pursue the virtual course tract.
- Advocate for expanded reliable broadband access to rural communities across Kansas. Access to reliable service is key for the successful delivery of virtual courses and tele-health.
- Partner with K-State Research and Extension and other professional educators to diversify learning experience to include horticulture and specialty crop and livestock production.
- Prioritize the fundraising and planning for the construction of a dedicated classroom space with bathrooms and an office for on-site behavioral therapy on the SAVE farm near Riley, KS. Continue to explore needs and establish funding for additional infrastructure including housing.
- Continue to partner with the University of Montana to deliver programs for apprentice, journeyman, and master-level beekeeping training. Develop and deliver commercial-level beekeeping and honey production training.

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY



IMPROVING OUR ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION AND DELIVERY

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

- Continue developing and delivering farm tours. These tours serve not only as educational activities, but are opportunities to share the SAVE story and expand our partnerships.
- Develop a professional trainee-to-employee program that partners interested veterans with an industry partner for hands on training and career opportunities.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- SAVE delivers a high quality educational experience to our students, providing flexible, regionally-specific training online, in the classroom, and hands-on in the field.
- At least 80% of SAVE graduates are still working in an agribusiness-related career five years after program completion



IMPROVING OUR ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION AND DELIVERY

“One of the greatest things about SAVE Farm is that it's student led, that there is so much focus on the students and helping them get to where they want to go. The instructors and the mentors that are available are incredible.”

“So people from even outside of the program ...and also those we interacted with during the class, there were more than willing to help us with anything and everything. That's huge, because when a person who's successfully doing something says to another person, I'll help you or it's possible. Like, that's just hugely helpful in all ways.”

“It would be nice to be able to fall into a niche that you were able to, no matter where you were in your life, no matter where you were in the United States, you were able to walk onto a campus and say, I'd like to do SAVE and they say, yes, go right ahead, right here, come on in.”

Anonymous quotes from members, participants, and stakeholders of SAVE Organization



IMPLEMENTING SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EXTERNAL MARKETING AND OUTREACH

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

- Form and activate a Communications Committee comprised of board members and external partners (if necessary). Committee will report at each board meeting and provide a monthly written summary of activities and recommendations to all board members.
- Develop a formal communications and outreach strategy to accompany this overarching strategic plan. The communication plan should be developed by the CEO, in partnership with the Communications Committee, and should place immediate emphasis on student recruitment and funding.
- Host at least one annual public Open House at the SAVE farm near Riley and the Golden Prairie Honey Farm in Manhattan.
- Create a SAVE Ambassador Program with consistent presentation materials (ie - PowerPoints, brochures, talking points). Ambassadors could include board members, SAVE program graduates, and others. All Ambassadors will receive training and will be equipped to share a consistent representation of SAVE. Ambassadors commit to reaching out to a minimum of five current or potential partners, donors, or sources of students per year.



IMPLEMENTING SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EXTERNAL MARKETING AND OUTREACH

- Update and maintain SAVE website and marketing materials to reflect our mission, vision, and current priorities.
- Create and distribute a high quality, informative monthly newsletter highlighting activities, events, successes, and needs of both SAVE and Golden Prairie Honey Farm.
- Enhance SAVE social media presence with a focus on promoting SAVE-specific programs and activities, complemented by re-posts from other organizations or news sites.
- Reengage 502 Media, presenting this strategic plan to inform the development of our strategic marketing and outreach plan.

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

- SAVE is recognized locally, regionally, and nationally as a premier, veteran-focused, agricultural training organization.
- SAVE board members, employees, volunteers, and partners feel well-informed and equipped to share our mission, vision, and priorities.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



BUILDING A PARTNER AND VOLUNTEER PROGRAM THAT FOCUSES ON RECRUITING AND RETAINING NEW AND CURRENT PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

- Develop a comprehensive list of our partners and volunteers including contact information and a description of assets and services.
- Clearly identify partners and significant donors on our website with a description of benefits provided.
- Formally recognize through our website and outreach materials the unique partnership with and significant contributions of Konza Community Health Center in the delivery of behavioral health services.
- Provide routine communication through newsletters, emails, and personal phone calls to ensure all partners and volunteers are informed of our current activities, programs, and needs.
- Host an annual event to honor and show appreciation to our donors, volunteers and partners.
- Celebrate our course and program graduates each year with a ceremony.
- Share our story with the Knowledge Based Economic Development (KBED) partnership to explore opportunities for economic development and job creation.
- Host a presentation of the SAVE programs with K-State Extension Professionals and faculty with an expressed interest in supporting veterans through outreach and education.



BUILDING A PARTNER AND VOLUNTEER PROGRAM THAT FOCUSES ON RECRUITING AND RETAINING NEW AND CURRENT PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS

- Continue to engage with the Governor's Behavioral Health Services Planning Council.
- By 2025, evaluate progress towards implementation of this strategic plan and the development of a clear model that can be replicated in alternate regions of the United States. At that time, collaborate with the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and garner cross agency support from the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, to launch a Capacity Development Grant program. The purpose of these grants is to build wide spectrum veteran-focused farm training programs across the nation through an integrated network of land grant institutions using the SAVE model.

- All of our partners, donors, and volunteers feel valued, appreciated, and well informed and are poised to advance our mission, vision, and priorities.

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

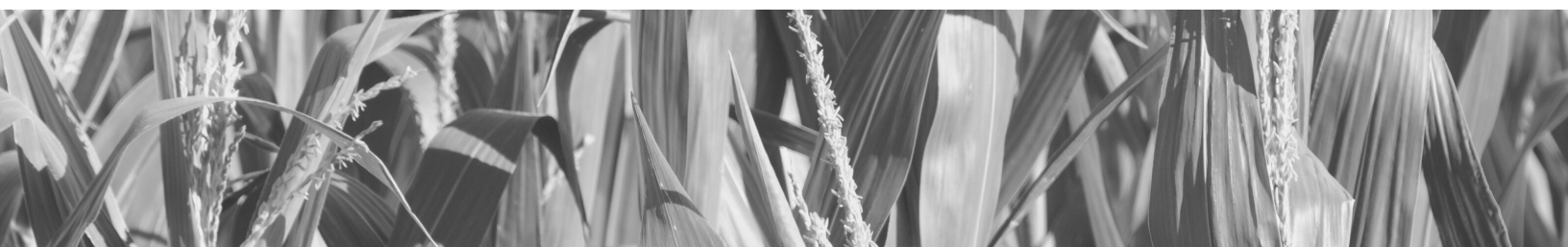
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



DEVELOPING CLEAR WAYS TO MEASURE, EVALUATE, AND COMMUNICATE THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK

ADDRESSING THIS PRIORITY

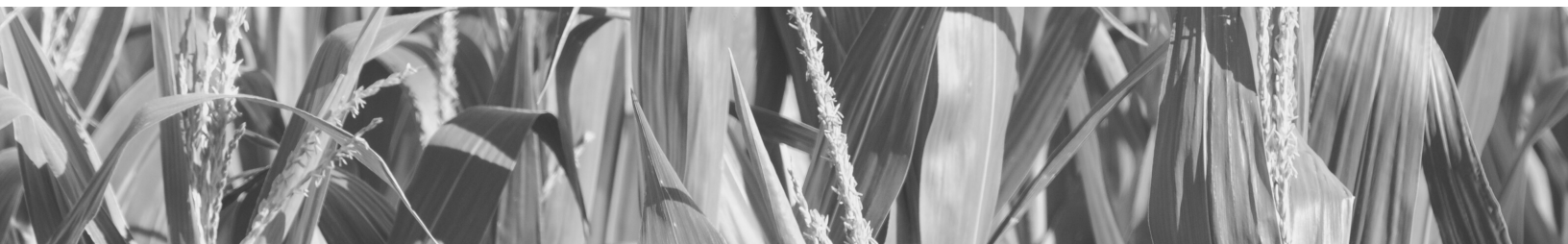
- Collect and maintain consistent metrics related to program participation and completion and farm tour attendance.
- Conduct an annual survey of student graduates to assess transition into agricultural and agribusiness careers.
- Continue to contract with a third party evaluator such as K-State Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation for all major grants.
- Identify opportunities through grants and partnerships with K-State to collect data on the impacts and outcomes of horticultural therapy and integrated behavioral health treatments.
- Collect data related to soil health, water use, and other variables to demonstrate the short and long-term effects of regenerative agricultural practices.
- Clearly measure and document the process and outcomes of the partnership with Grandma Hoerners to pilot the processing of honey. This information will be helpful in evaluating the pros and cons for fully launching an at-scale honey processing program.
- Hold an annual board retreat to review and assess progress towards meeting the goals and priorities of this strategic plan.



DEVELOPING CLEAR WAYS TO MEASURE, EVALUATE, AND COMMUNICATE THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK

- Our results and impacts are readily accessible and are communicated externally.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?



WHAT IS NEXT

SAVE is poised for a positive future because all partners share a common vision in relation to the organization's core mission, intent, and direction. It is an exciting, challenging, and meaningful direction, which helps give all of us a feeling of purpose, pride, and unity. In the next five years, we will expand our reach, strengthen our network of stakeholders and partners to leverage their assets in meeting our mission, and firmly establish SAVE as the model for veteran-focused agricultural training programs. There will never be a shortage of veterans transitioning into civilian life – nor a shortage in the demand for food production. Where those two spaces meet - that is where SAVE lives. If you believe in our vision and mission and are inspired by the opportunity to make a meaningful impact in the lives of our nation's veterans and agricultural community – join us!

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