

2017 AG TOURISM SUMMIT

Suisun Valley Evolution
To
Ag Tourism
&
Leveraging Broader Visitation Models

The Evolution of Need

- ▣ Growers loose contracts during grape oversupply, collapse of Tri Valley Growers
- ▣ Solutions to future ag stability sought.
- ▣ Solano Irrigation District Fears Detachments
- ▣ City of Fairfield Councilmembers believe quality of life and property values at risk.
- ▣ Suisun Valley Fund established, co funded by both to hopefully find a path.
- ▣ Convergence of opportunity to meet the need.

Self Governance and Finance

- ▣ Growers meet to explore options, seek vehicle.
- ▣ A set of goals attached to a set of by laws proposed to form Association.
- ▣ Second meeting votes formation, seats 9 member BOD for Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association. 44 members join. 100% volunteer leadership, executive committee develops and files association documents with CA Sec of State.
- ▣ Dues of \$100 per entity established to fund initial budget approved by BOD.
- ▣ Prepare to seek grants from Suisun Valley Fund
- ▣ Insurance, legal and accounting – you need it

Development and Implementation of Programs

- ▣ Suisun Valley Fund approves grants for rack card, brochure, web site and PR group. The building of a marketing infrastructure.
- ▣ Finding the brand able component – Suisun Valley
- ▣ Way finding program proposed, funded and installed on Solano County road right of way
- ▣ Grower tech programs developed
- ▣ Regional and State Associations leveraged
- ▣ Events ultimately created by year three.

Growth and Preparation

- ▣ A new membership dues concept created to survive sunset of Suisun Valley Fund years before end of funding, deliberate pursuit sustainable Assn
- ▣ Assimilation of farm trail group supported by Fund, insure uniform messaging to brand.
- ▣ Renaming to Suisun Valley Vintners and Growers Assn
- ▣ Dues program phased in over three years as fund winds down, \$10/acre per year \$200 min/\$2000 max.
- ▣ Fund sunsets and SVVGA financially on it's own
- ▣ Events budgeted to provide major source of new funding

Markets and Marketing

- ▣ 5 year strategic marketing plan created, focuses to three progressive market service areas all linked by I-80 corridor.
- ▣ Visitation model selected over distribution
- ▣ Brand messaging document created.
- ▣ First phase local awareness in Solano County
- ▣ Second phase SF to Sacramento
- ▣ Third phase complete Bay Area to Reno/Tahoe
- ▣ Total market scope at roughly 6 million

Results Achieved to Plan

- ▣ Set expectation of visible results to need three years to reality.
- ▣ Act like you belong strategy works with larger state organizations, integrated into their efforts
- ▣ Solano market awareness expands
- ▣ Post Suisun Valley Fund shift to alliance with Fairfield CVB/BID to carry broader message
- ▣ Farm stand and tasting room impacts become visible to members.
- ▣ Suisun Valley works with Solano County to recast zoning and permitting in General Plan Update
- ▣ 2016 tasting room growth at 20+% value and volume

Confluence of Urban and Ag Tourism

- ▣ Alliance with Fairfield CVB joins city tourism efforts with products and programs in SV ag tourism.
- ▣ Diverse programs, cross sales, sponsorship and room nights sold results.
- ▣ Expansion to additional regional CVB, Vacaville. Farm to table, restaurant week components
- ▣ Entities realize demand generation capacity; ag tourism visitors to hotel rooms, hotel guest are ag tourism visitors
- ▣ Gain broad impacts via synergy created, funding via BID mechanism inside cities.

Lessons Learned

- ▣ Committed groups must come together from their own needs, not good idea programs.
- ▣ Seed funding (if available) must be joined by 'skin in the game' contribution.
- ▣ Specialty ag focus is what works
- ▣ Use seed money to build marketing infrastructure, dues to sustain long term
- ▣ Embrace the strengths of professional types with small lifestyle farms with the strengths of seasoned farmers understanding of agriculture to build the organization for long haul.
- ▣ Build programs that can be integrated into the funded tourism entities around you.

Interesting Example

- ▣ SVVGA needed new demand market for grapes, protracted oversupply threatens all
- ▣ Saw existence of new market in Eastern US
- ▣ Took team to trade show to explore, \$250,000 sales resulted
- ▣ Expanded that market via produce distributors that focused to specialty crop.
- ▣ Consumer acceptance of better product resulted in desire to come see growers and region
- ▣ 2016 saw several groups visit FF and Suisun Valley; one group of 45 client/guests 3night stay left \$12,000 in hotel revenue, \$3,000 alone on one evening dinner. Their 2016 product purchase well in excess of \$250,000. All win