Executive Summary

A Social Club: Building Community through Nature and Sustainability Events

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY

Much of the food we eat is grown far away and has to travel long distances to reach our neighborhood grocery stores and kitchens. Many city dwellers crave deeper connections with nature and long to participate in growing their own food. Get Well Farms is our solution. It’s an all-ages social club which spreads useful information, sells reusable products for cultivation and harvest of produce, and fosters community through hands-on nature and sustainability events. As the Get Well Farms brand grows, our members will create lifelong memories together. They’ll become better equipped for the future as educated and empowered consumers in the thriving wellness, sustainability and local food sectors of our city’s economy. Through their Get Well Farms memberships, a new generation of young and old aspiring urban farmers will be equipped for a paradigm shift where agricultural production is done on their own backyard, roof, balcony or countertop instead of in the Central Valley of California.

SOLUTION/PRODUCT

Get Well Farms’ first major initiative will be to introduce our stackable mushroom cultivation system, which we will sell through our website and make available to our members. Texas Oncology’s used cold stream shipping products become the ideal sterile vessel in which we transport organic grape and grain waste directly from the Austin Winery and other friends in the local beer and wine industry. Manufacture of the mushrooms kits is a simple 3 step process that costs less than $1. Step one is the branding. Each cooler needs two stickers: one with the Get Well Farms logo and another with easy-to-follow instructions for at-home cultivation, harvest, and re-use, return or recycling of the container. Step two is ventilation: each kit needs several plugs cut in the sides for mushrooms to fruit out of. Step three is mixing in starter culture to inoculate the cooler contents with mycelium. Introducing at-home mushroom cultivation is an important first step in familiarizing members of the club with the wide world of regenerative agriculture practices. Oyster mushrooms are tasty, high in protein, and really great for immune system support, but not everyone loves to eat mushrooms, but not everybody knows that just like oysters in a wetlands ecosystem, oyster mushrooms are ecological superheroes. The network of mycelium underneath the mushrooms themselves has the power to filter out contaminants, break down organic compounds, and release valuable nutrients from the place where it grows. Once our customers experience the satisfaction of growing their own mushrooms, we expect to see that experience spark future engagement with projects in sustainable urban agriculture or ecological restoration. For example, they might pursue experiments in their local community with mushroom mycelium as a boost for soil health, an erosion-stopper, and even a sustainable building material.
POTENTIAL RETURN/REVENUE MODEL

We’ve projected a 23% gross profit margin for fiscal year 1 which compares fairly well with 37% gross margins in the 2018 recreation industry, and especially well with the mere 12% achieved in agriculture last year. Get Well Farms’s social club revenue model has three clear advantages. First, the array of farm-skills events we host will attract consumers from a dozen healthy markets within our city: fitness and recreation, CSA subscriptions, family friendly activities, DIY, gardening and botanical societies, social meetups, meditative practices, homesteading, ecotourism, survivalism and adventure, and animal therapy. Our second advantage is the wonderfully low material costs associated with providing goods as opposed to services as the primary revenue stream. Finally, we have the advantage of multiple revenue streams with staggered rates of growth. We project gross profit of $58K for fiscal year 1, and will net $16K in income after expenses and taxes.

COMPETITION

The Get Well Farms model incorporates diverse, all-ages, therapeutic modes of recreation and is unique but also vulnerable in this way. Why should consumers buy our membership when they’re unsure of what to expect at any given event? Through excellent social media and email communications we hope to eliminate confusion and foster courage among our members, and conversely, we expect to see our social capital skyrocket as we contract with experts in various fields to enrich our themed events. Four members of our team are experienced with 4 years or more in the hospitality industry, and we will operate the business with a sincerity and transparency that we know the Austin community notices and appreciates. In terms of competition, we may see botanical societies, urban farms, and other recreation businesses jump on the wagon and follow our model, but we expect our brand to be a strong early comer to a market that is robust and growing at such a rate that we won’t be too vulnerable to losing our market share.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Get Well Farms mushroom kit looks to divert 700+ styrofoam coolers and 8,000+ lbs per year of organic matter from the waste stream. The inoculated organic matter from the mushroom kits becomes neutralized by the mycelium after several weeks and makes a direct, healthy amendment to garden beds or lawns, and users can refill the kit with organic material such as coffee grounds at home. Alternatively the kit be returned at a Get Well Farms event to be re-incorporated into our greenhouse mushroom tower operation. Because the kit will be kept out of direct sunlight, the styrofoam will not degrade and can be cleaned and reused as a mushroom kit indefinitely. Broken or otherwise damaged coolers will be returned to the Get Well Farms greenhouse to be cleaned and recycled. We have the advantage of proximity to Austin’s Recycle and Reuse Drop-Off Center, which has a hopper and extruder for styrofoam.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Get Well Farms team will start off with part-time employment for its 5 members and during fiscal year 1 we plan to bring on at least one salaried employee. At and above living wage, feel-good part-time job opportunities will continue to grow as the business does. We are excited to expand on our existing relationships in the locavore & ecology industries through independent contracting and venue rentals with our community partners and local experts. Since our team has come of age in Austin, we have a huge resource of wonderful friendships and affiliations with organizations such as Eden East Farm, Jester King Brewery, the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems, the Waller Creek Conservancy, the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, the Central Texas Young Farmers Coalition, Green Gate Farms, Juiceland, L’Oca D’Oro, The Brewer’s Table, Justine’s Brasserie, The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Treefolks, the Recycle and
Reuse Drop-Off Center, Hops and Grain, Brew and Brew, Dai Due, Salt and Time and, of course, Josco Products, Texas Oncology and The Austin Winery.

THE TEAM

The Get Well Farms team formed organically around a shared living space in a historic farmhouse within a serene landscape and close-knit suburban neighborhood where you just might catch a glimpse of a potbellied pig sleeping in the sun or see a lady walking with a goat on a leash. At our South Austin home, we worked and played hard, became as close as a family members, and practiced our own methods of perennial gardening, animal care, and land stewardship. Part of our team are our beloved feathered and four-legged friends who wake us up each morning. Other team members include Mateo Mares, who has the ability to take our brand viral and who leads our social media with impeccable taste. Like Mateo, Sarah Reyes has unmatched curatorial abilities. She is trained in herbal apothecary production, has hospitality experience, and is the team’s creative direction. Carson Jewell is our engineer and the team’s premier mechanical problem solver. Hyatt Stengle is also an incredible technical resource and is the owner of her own small handywoman business. Elise Powell is the in-house graphic designer, regenerative agriculturist, animal trainer, and team leader. Soon we will invite applicants to become our unstoppable volunteer corps and train them with valuable skills in exchange for free or reduced cost of membership. We also plan to hire independent contractors who are experts in their field to speak to our members during our themed events.

EXECUTION PLAN/GO TO MARKET STRATEGY

An important milestone for fiscal year 1 is hitting the 350 member mark. The revenue from these base level members will be supplemented revenue from 70-100 sponsor-level memberships sold. At 500 base-level members, the Get Well Farms membership will cap and form a waiting list in order to preserve the intimate quality and minimal environmental impact of our events, but as the brand accumulates social capital and we create viral internet content, new opportunities for revenue emerge such as healthy merchandise sales, online advertising, and consulting for farms who want to implement our mushroom tower system. Opportunities for scalability after year 1 include establishing Get Well Farms club chapters in other cities and ecoregions and making space in our operations for grant funded research opportunities for nature therapy at leased, Get Well Farms-managed green spaces.