



COLORADO
COME TO LIFE

Cultural, Heritage
& Agritourism
Strategic Plan

A Three-Year Action Plan For the Promotion of Agritourism in the State of Colorado

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Chapter 1: Purpose and Scope of the Strategic Plan	4
Chapter 2: History and Development of Agritourism Internationally and in the US	5
Chapter 3: Legislative and Regulatory Challenges	7
Chapter 4: Evolution of Colorado's Agritourism Travel Markets	11
Chapter 5: Partners in Promotion and Product Development	14
Chapter 6: Connecting Agritourism and Heritage Tourism in Colorado	18
Chapter 7: Local Food and Beverages	21
Chapter 8: Strategic Approach and Recommendations	22
Chapter 9: A Three-Year Action Plan for the Promotion of Colorado's Agritourism	25
Appendix A: Colorado Agritourism Promotion Legislation	
Appendix B: State Efforts in Agritourism in the United States	



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document outlines a three-year action plan to guide the Colorado Tourism Office in ongoing strategic investments of funds that are dedicated to the promotion of agritourism in Colorado through the distribution of funds from Article 13, Unclaimed Property Act C.R.S. 38-13-116.7 which is funding for use in the promotion of agritourism in the state.

The opportunity is significant for the 37,000 farms in Colorado. The 2007 Census of Agriculture showed only 679 of those – less than two percent – reported income from agritourism.

The goal of promoting Colorado agritourism is rural economic development, and three objectives guide the program: 1) To put a spotlight on those Colorado agritourism businesses that are visitor ready, 2) To stimulate the development of fresh and new high-quality agritourism experiences for travelers, and 3) To support regional clusters of businesses that are working together to develop and promote agritourism.

Strategies include a series of statewide Road Shows in the fall of 2013 that will promote existing agritourism enterprises, and offer on-the-spot training for entrepreneurs who want to get started with their own businesses. The program will develop a cadre of peer mentors, offer a matching grants program to clusters of businesses, and conduct a public relations and social media program that will keep rural people and places in the media.

Three key findings about factors producing business success in Colorado emerged from observations from the strategic planning process: 1) the agritourism experience is located near an urban or population center, 2) it is located near a cluster of additional tourism activities, so that travelers have choices once they arrive, and 3) the agritourism business operators have a broad network of partnerships.

The plan highlights the need to tackle twin barriers of liability for farmers and ranchers, with local and county regulations that inhibit the development of new services for travelers. The plan outlines a method to set quality standards and increase the number of visitor-ready experiences for travelers.

To reach their recommendations, the strategic planning team conducted ten interactive workshops across Colorado with farmers, ranchers and other stakeholders, completed telephone interviews with industry leaders and elected officials, surveyed tourism marketing professionals via the Internet and completed in-depth research about agritourism programs in other states. In the Colorado legislation, “agritourism” is defined as “the practice of engaging in activities, events, and services that have been provided to consumers for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes at a farm, ranch, or other agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation in order to allow consumers to experience, learn about, and participate in various facets of agricultural industry, culinary pursuits, natural resources, and heritage.”



CHAPTER ONE:

Purpose and Scope of the Strategic Plan

The goal is to stimulate rural economic development in Colorado through the promotion and growth of agritourism.

Objectives of the program are:

- A. To put a spotlight on visitor-ready agritourism businesses.
- B. To stimulate the development of new agritourism experiences for travelers.
- C. To support and establish regional clusters of businesses that are working together to develop and promote agritourism.

The Scope of Work

The plan will provide direction to the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) about how to advance agritourism and heritage tourism in Colorado most specifically through the allocation and leveraging of funding from Colorado's agritourism statute. This will include:

- 1) Promoting agritourism and heritage tourism in Colorado through statewide marketing, public relations, and social media strategies.
- 2) Promoting partnerships that will stimulate rural economic development.
- 3) Identifying regulatory barriers that inhibit the development of agritourism businesses.
- 4) Establishing quality assurance in every aspect of the program from marketing through the agritourism experiences themselves.
- 5) Evaluating the program by measuring the Return on Investment in agritourism promotion.

CHAPTER TWO:

History and Development of Agritourism Internationally and in the US

International Agritourism

As populations increase and the cost of land and labor skyrockets, farmers and ranchers across the U.S. are following the lead of Europe, Australia and New Zealand, turning to agritourism as one way to diversify their revenue. In Italy, this business is termed "agriturismo," and in Britain, Australia and New Zealand it is known as "farm stay holidays."

As small scale farming became less profitable in Italy in the 1950s to 1970s, farms were abandoned when farmers left to search for work in larger towns and cities. An agriturismo law was passed in 1985 to regulate and encourage Italian farm stays. Estimates place today's number of agriturismo locations in Italy between 9,000 to 20,000 and their success has led many other European Union countries to enact similar national policies to help increase farm income and create jobs in rural communities. There are three types of agriturismo classifications in Italy: A) One that provides light meals or self-service snacks; B) One that offers full-service meals; and C) One that provides farm holidays that include meals, lodging and other activities. In Italy, agriturismo farmers are also allowed to sell value added farm products including locally produced wines, olive oils, pasta, prepared meats, cheeses, jellies and jams, honey, baked goods and crafts.

One subset of farm stay holidays currently attracting many young travelers is called WWOOFing. This acronym has variously meant "Working Weekends on Organic Farms," "Willing Workers on Organic Farms," and most recently "World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms." WWOOF was established in the fall of 1971 when a secretary in London organized a working weekend at a farm as an affordable way to get to spend time in the British countryside. Currently there are 1,634 WWOOF farms located in 43 different countries, and the numbers are growing.

Agritourism in the United States

Here in the United States, the practice of visiting farms owned by family and friends gained popularity in the 1920s when the automobile made it easier to travel from the city to the countryside. At that time almost everyone had a relative or friend on a farm. Today, with fewer farmers producing more food, people have become disconnected with the sources of their food. Agritourism offers a new way to fulfill the desire to reshape this food/source connection.

Different sectors of agritourism including farmers markets, corn mazes and more recently farm-to-table dinners have been growing for several decades. This past decade has seen tremendous growth in the number of statewide

"Because the snow-pack is so low this year, we may need to work especially hard to encourage and support farmers and ranchers in offering other experiences that can tide them over if next year is very low on water for agriculture."

"Of course, if we are successful in introducing new income sources, this may prove to be the boost many need to encourage them to continue to develop their supplemental income activities into an ever greater portion of their ranch income plan."

~ Linda Balough, Park County National Heritage Area



agritourism programs in the United States. Online research indicated that almost every state in the country has some kind of agritourism program or agritourism resources, though the capacity of these programs varies significantly from state to state.

It is most common to find statewide agritourism programs housed in the department of agriculture or with a university extension program, though a number of states have developed stand-alone, non-profit agritourism associations. Key issues for states include liability, signage, agritourism associations, certification and promotion.

Agritourism in Colorado

Agritourism in Colorado shares similarities with other states:

- The Colorado Department of Agriculture and CSU extension have been actively involved in agritourism in Colorado for a number of years.
- Liability issues are one of the top concerns for agritourism producers.
- Many of the visitor-ready agritourism attractions are located on smaller farms.
- Many of Colorado's agritourism experiences are local food-related.

However, Colorado's agritourism efforts differ from what is typically found in other states:

- The Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) is fully engaged in the state's agritourism efforts.
- Dedicated funding from the unclaimed property tourism promotion fund will fund statewide marketing.
- While Colorado has legislation for recreational land use which encompasses agritourism, it does not have specific limited liability legislation for agritourism like many other states.
- Several other states have successfully been able to use TODS (Tourism Oriented Directional Signage) for agritourism. While Colorado participates in the TODS program, few agritourism attractions are participating in this program.
- Colorado does not have a dedicated agritourism association.
- Water issues are a bigger concern for Colorado's agritourism attractions than they are for agritourism attractions in other states.
- The pairing of heritage and agritourism is unique in Colorado.

CHAPTER THREE:

Legislation and Regulation

Current Statewide Legislation Related to Agritourism in Colorado

Colorado is one of the only states with an agritourism statute that provides funding to the state tourism office dedicated to the promotion of agritourism. Colorado currently has a state recreation use statute that provides some liability protection for private landowners who allow public access for recreational purposes, and additional state legislation that addresses liability for equine operations. Colorado, however, does not have limited liability legislation specifically for agritourism. Legal research to compare Colorado's current agritourism legislation with agritourism legislation for other states would determine whether or not additional liability legislation would be appropriate for Colorado.

Statewide and National Legislation Impacting Agritourism

The National Ag Law Center has a searchable database that includes all but the most recently passed agritourism at <http://nationalaglawcenter.org/readingrooms/agritourism/>. This online resource includes links to pertinent national legislation including the Animal Welfare Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, States' Recreational Use Statutes, and States' Equine Activity Statutes. Agritourism operations in all states must comply with the national Animal Welfare Act and Americans with Disabilities Act. All 50 states have recreation use statutes in place, and all but four states (California, Maryland, Nevada and New York) have state equine activity liability statutes.

Within the last ten years more than half the states in the U.S. have passed some kind of limited liability legislation specifically for agritourism. North Carolina was one of the first states in the U.S. to pass limited liability legislation in 2005, and many states including Virginia, Georgia and Mississippi have based their legislation on North Carolina's pioneering example. Statutes include liability protections for agritourism operators, address zoning requirements, or include tax credits for agritourism. A state-by-state outline is located in Appendix B.

Louisiana's 2008 agritourism legislation stipulates that the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry will define a "plan of operation" for all agritourism ventures that will define best practices for risk management. Alabama's legislation, which passed in 2011, requires the Department of Transportation to provide assistance with agritourism signage. Limited liability legislation in Kansas specifies that agritourism operations need to be registered businesses with signs posted about the risks, and requires all agritourism operations to carry liability insurance.

"So many legislators didn't realize the impact of limited liability legislation for agritourism in Oklahoma. To get the bill sponsored and started the initiative had tremendous support from our Oklahoma Farm Bureau and other grass roots organizations."

*~ Jamie Cummings,
Oklahoma
Agritourism Program
Administrator*



Interviews with leaders in other states confirmed that liability is one of the top issues affecting agritourism development. In some states agritourism legislation passed on the first try, while other states have had to introduce legislation several times before successful passage. Strong grassroots support and the cultivation of support from elected officials, have been key factors in successful lobbying campaign efforts.

The Role of Agritourism Associations

In many states, agritourism associations play an important advocacy role to represent the interests of private agritourism operations, especially as state government agencies are often prohibited from lobbying. The creation of a statewide agritourism association with grassroots membership has been critical in getting legislation passed in a number of states. This was the case in Tennessee, where the agritourism association has gone to court to help defend farmers who have been sued.

While Colorado does not have an agritourism association, it may be possible to work with an existing statewide agricultural organization (such as the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union) and supportive elected officials to address these regulatory concerns that may inhibit the growth of agritourism in Colorado. Private grassroots support will be critical if new agritourism legislation is introduced.

Kentucky's agritourism legislation finally passed in 2012, after failing in 2004 and 2006. Ben Shaffar, then Director of Agritourism for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture reflects "Two key factors that helped Kentucky pass limited liability legislation for agritourism this last time were: 1) the fact that the co-sponsors of the legislation served on the Kentucky Agritourism Council, and 2) other contiguous states had just passed similar legislation, and that set a precedent that put pressure on our legislators."

Oregon made an unsuccessful attempt to introduce limited liability legislation for agritourism in 2013 because of opposition from the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association. There are plans to reintroduce legislation in 2014 with a stronger grassroots lobbying effort to emphasize the benefits to agritourism operators. Delaware also has plans to introduce new legislation within the coming year.

Jamie Cummings, the Oklahoma Agritourism Program Administrator noted "Because we have no liability caps, it is really hard to get a good agritourism policy and the insurance is really expensive. It has driven some people out of business." Oklahoma's limited liability legislation subsequently passed in April 2013.

Additional Strategies to Address Safety and Liability Issues

Limited liability legislation is supplemental and does not replace liability insurance for agritourism operations. Many states provide additional assistance or suggestions about ways to ensure safety. For example, Louisiana recommends that agritourism operators use the website www.safeagritourism.com as a useful free online tool for a virtual safety walk through.

Other states provide safety workshops or have knowledgeable staff who walk through an agritourism operation with the owner to help identify potential risks and make recommendations. Some offer common sense strategies to agritourism operators such as suggesting the creation of a separate LLC for agritourism operations so that if a liability issue arises, a farmer may lose that one operation but would not risk losing the entire farm.

Local Legislation Impacting Agritourism Development

Stakeholders across Colorado recognize that legislation at the county level can also help or hinder the development of agritourism. In Steamboat Springs, the Routt County Planning Commission is working with local agriculture organizations, agencies and producers to address barriers that may inhibit new growth.

The commission is developing a matrix of land use and agriculture use regulations with the purpose of providing more clarity for business people who are analyzing the feasibility of a start-up in either agritourism or in a production process for value-added products. Obstacles are almost universal, notes Nancy Kramer of the Northwest Colorado Cultural Heritage Program.

Existing county legislation has been especially problematic for newer agritourism attractions such as farm-to-table dinners and wineries. Boulder County recognized that farm dinners have become extremely popular, yet technically these events were not allowed by code. In 2013, Boulder County revised their Land Use Code to allow farmers to complete up to six farm-to-table dinners and other events on their properties without having to go through a special review and approval process. This change, however, has not been enough to help some businesses that are operating weddings and other special events. Additional contested issues in the Boulder Land Use Code include the requirement that wineries must be located in industrial and light industrial zoning districts rather than in agricultural or rural residential districts. The Daily Camera newspaper has kept these issues at the forefront of community discussions.

http://www.dailycamera.com/ci_22281319/proposed-bouldercountyag-regs-would-set-rules?IADID=Search-www.dailycamera.com-www.dailycamera.com

Permitting for activities on federal lands has been another key issue, especially with horseback riding and pack trips for rural ranchers.

The two most frequent concerns expressed during the Ag Tourism Regional workshops concerned vulnerability to changes in tax status and signage. Property owners need information about whether creating income from on-farm traveler experiences would shift their land status from agriculture to commercial. An example of signage challenges was reported from Mesa County where technically, the Two Rivers Winery and Chateau was eligible to qualify for a Tourist Oriented Directional Sign (TODS); however, they ran into resistance from city staff who felt that TODS signs were unsightly and would be confusing and distracting for drivers. The winery has not yet secured signage.

"Our legislation went through on the first round because we did our homework ahead of time. We reviewed agritourism limited liability legislation passed in other states, and for states where legislation did not pass we tried to find out why. We used that information to have meaningful conversations with people who had concerns about the legislation, and in the end were able to craft legislation that would for the most part please everyone involved."

*~ Dora Ann Hatch,
Agritourism
Coordinator,
Louisiana State
University AgCenter*



Agritourism program managers at both the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) and the Department of Agriculture will most certainly continue to receive inquiries about regulations and legislation related to agritourism operations. In fact, inquiries will probably increase as the promotion of agritourism stimulates new entrepreneurial ventures. Ideally, a process could be set up set up to funnel local regulation problems to an organization or an agency that could help systematically identify problems and remove barriers for agritourism businesses around the state.

To address the scope of the challenges and myriad of local regulations, CTO needs an additional partner. The Department of Local Affairs, whose mission includes problem solving for rural communities, is not only best equipped to provide assistance in this arena, but has a deep and successful history of providing financial and technical support to the development of the Heritage Tourism program at CTO.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Evolution of Colorado's Agritourism Travel Markets

The 2002 Census of Agriculture listed income from hunting, fishing, and wine tours as "Recreational Services," a category that was expanded to "Agri-tourism and Recreational Services" in the 2007 census. This change reflected new profits from travelers' rapidly expanding interest in local foods and on-farm/ranch experiences. This same evolution can be traced in Colorado, where agritourism activities that have been drawing travelers since the late 1800's continue to attract three different market segments: 1) Outdoor Recreationists 2) Families with Children (and outdoor event goers), and most recently, 3) Foodies and Education Enthusiasts.

1) Outdoor Recreationists

The recreational use of agricultural land is the longest established form of agritourism in Colorado, where travelers have opportunities to access private agricultural lands for fishing, hunting, horseback riding, and other outdoor pursuits. Hosting hunters has been a long-standing source of seasonal income for many mid to large size agricultural operations. These recreational uses generally do not require intensive investment in either time or capital expense from the farmer or rancher and often utilize cabins, bunkhouses, barns and other established facilities.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is an active partner in this sector, leasing lands annually for their walk-in program that serves hunters of upland birds, waterfowl and big game. This program gives hunters permission to access specified private properties, provides an authentic experience, and gives farmers a chance to educate the public about their agricultural operations as well as their stewardship of local lands.

Recent trends include growing interest in bird watching and wildlife viewing. Activities like bird watching and wildlife viewing offer strong cross-marketing opportunities with cultural heritage travelers who like to take part in a variety of different activities when they travel.

2) Families and Special Event Goers

Activities in this category target children and teenagers and include U-picks, farm stands, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, haunted hay rides, and harvest festivals with carnival rides and food booths. It can also include agricultural properties that are used as venues for concerts, weddings and other special events. A good Colorado example is the May Farm located east of Denver. Mid and small sized farms usually operate these events, and are frequently found very near population centers.

Dude and Guest Ranches are long standing examples of working ranches or resort ranches that have established visitor-ready operations that are their primary source of income.

"What outfitters need is a way to connect with individuals interested in these kinds of expanded experiences that could be offered across Colorado."

~ Dick Ray, Past President of Colorado Outfitters Association

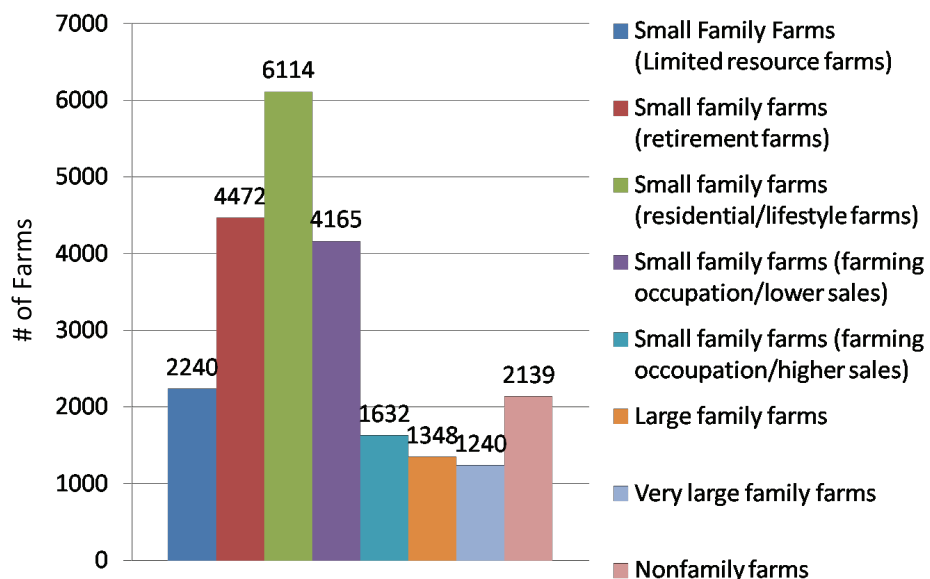


State and county fairs have been combining agricultural lifestyle, products and entertainment for years. Pumpkin patches have been on the landscape for generations; the Venetucci Farm in Fountain, for example, has been in business since 1936. Corn mazes and farmers markets burst onto the scene in the 1990's. Corn Mazes America, a firm that designs in fields across the country, reports that the first corn maze in the United States was created in the early 1990s. By 1998, between 50 and 100 opened for business, and by 2008 the number of corn mazes in the U.S. topped 800. Likewise, the U.S. Department of Agriculture listings in the National Directory of Farmers Markets reports a growth from 1,755 farmers markets in 1994 to 7,864 in 2012.

Barb Bowman of the Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau points out that U-picks may be Colorado's longest established agritourism draw. From the late 1800's, this high valley was an autumn destination for families from throughout the region who came to buy bushels of fruit for canning. Soon Denverites were heading over the mountains by train, not only for the fruit, but for the travel experience. Today, Front Range travelers continue to make that same journey to the Western Slope – and now vineyards and wine tastings are the draw.

Sheep dog trials in Meeker are drawing 20,000 visitors a year, and Steamboat Springs will host their inaugural year of the National Cattledog Trials in 2013.

Types of Farms in U.S. with Agri-Tourism Income



Based on data from the USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture

3) Foodies and Education Enthusiasts

This category represents the most recent trend in agritourism and tightens personal connections between farm and table. Fresh, local foods and beverages are often the core component in farm-to-table dinners, winery and brewery tours, farm tours, open farm days, cheese making classes, cooking classes, and farm stays. Travelers today have multiple chances to learn more about how the foods that they care about personally are raised.

Colorado currently ranks third in the nation for the number of breweries behind California and Oregon, with 139 craft breweries in existence and an additional 75 in the planning stages. The Brewers Association notes that craft brewing grew out of an interest in home brewing that was popular in the late 1970s. Microbreweries began to appear in the 1980s and picked up steam in the 1990s. The number of craft brewers in the United States increased from 8 in 1980, to 537 in 1994, and in 2012 topped 1600. The Great American Beer Festival, held first in Denver in 1982, draws 50,000 visitors to Denver each year and claims to be the oldest and largest gathering of brewers in the United States.

Wineries have experienced similar growth in the past decade. An article in the Washington Post titled "American Wine, a Story of Great Growth" (February 12, 2013) reported that the number of wineries in the U.S. grew from approximately 2,000 at the turn of the millennium to 8,000 today. The article further states that all 50 states now produced some sort of wine, with the greatest growth coming outside of the traditional wine states of California, Oregon and Washington. Colorado has a growing number of brewery and winery tours offering opportunities to not only taste beer and wine, but also learn more about all stages of production from hops and grapes to the glass.

Travelers who are enthusiastic about local food and drink and who are eager to learn something new share a demographic profile with cultural heritage travelers. Both groups are well educated, well traveled, have high household incomes, and expect to learn new things when they travel. They seek authenticity and quality in their local experiences, and have the discretionary income to pay. Mandala Research LLC reported in 2013 that 76% of all leisure travelers nationwide participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling. These visitors tend to spend more and stay longer than other kinds of travelers, spending on average, \$1,319 per trip compared to \$820 for all U.S. travelers.



CHAPTER FIVE:

Partners in Promotion and Product Development

Clearly, Colorado's agritourism experiences have staying power. Even those that developed fishing and hunting a century ago remain a vibrant part of Colorado's tourism economy. Travel products and experiences continue to evolve and all require on-going marketing to compete.

The dedicated funding that is being generated by the unclaimed property tax fund is limited, yet the needs and the potential are tremendous. As the scope of agritourism is broad and as quality marketing is expensive, additional investment by program partners is necessary to leverage the CTO's agritourism promotion funds. Partners may serve on the Heritage and Agritourism (HAG) committee, and may provide staff or financial assistance in specific areas outlined in this plan. Partners may also take the lead in organizing proposals for matching grants for agritourism.

Marketing efforts funded by the CTO's agritourism funds should follow the guidelines below:

1. The funds must be used in promotions that directly target travelers
2. The funds must be used to promote what travelers can experience, not an agricultural product itself, i.e. promoting a brewery tour, not the beer itself.
3. The funds must support travel programs that take place on a farm or ranch, and/or provide a high quality, authentic experience that reflects the foods or agricultural traditions of a Colorado farm or ranch.
4. The funds should not be used to feature one business. Promotions that feature one or more agritourism activities must also promote nearby travel experiences. These "clusters" of travel products give travelers the power of choice.
5. Promotions must demonstrate links to rural Colorado – i.e. urban restaurants that serve meat, vegetables or fruit must demonstrate their link with "people and place" at the source.

Partners in Promotion and Product Development		
Agritourism Type	Examples of Experience for Travelers	Partners
1) Outdoor Recreation	Hunting Fishing Bird Watching Wildlife Viewing	Farmers & Ranchers Food & Farm Groups Colorado Parks & Wildlife Outfitters National Park Service US Forest Service Bureau of Land Management DMOs/Chambers of Commerce
2) Entertainment and Special Events	Pumpkin Patches Corn Mazes Harvest Festivals Haunted Hay Rides U-Picks Pizza Gardens Farm Stands Farmers Markets Event Venue (Weddings , Concerts)	Farmers & Ranchers Food & Farm Groups Colorado Dept. of Agriculture DMOs/Chambers of Commerce Cultural Heritage Tourism Groups Dude & Guest Ranches
3) Local Food Dining Experiences Farm to Table Dinners Restaurants featuring Local Foods	Local Food and Beverages Winery/Brewery/Distillery Tours Cheese-making Classes Beer & Wine Making Classes Canning Classes Bee Keeping Mushroom Foraging Fiber Classes Soil Preparation Classes Greenhouse Construction Barn Tours Open Farm Days Farm Stays	Farmers & Ranchers Food & Farm Groups Colorado Dept. of Agriculture History Colorado CO Scenic & Historic Byways NPS National Heritage Areas State & Local Affairs CO Dept. of Local Affairs CO Creative Industries DMOs/Chambers of Commerce Cultural Heritage Tourism Groups

"People don't really know what agritourism is. The name 'agritourism' is not sexy. We need to find a better name. "

*~ Steve Kurowski,
Colorado Brewers
Guild*

The chart above outlines a rich network of public and private partners that together can continue to create new agritourism experiences in Colorado. What Colorado offers travelers now was built on both creativity and risk taking by farmers, ranchers and other business entrepreneurs. It also reflects a sustained financial and staffing investment from three state agencies: the Department of Agriculture, History Colorado, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

The contributions of each are described below:

Colorado Department of Agriculture

Over the last five years the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) has conducted 16 community workshops for agritourism producers in conjunction with Colorado State University (CSU). Materials from these workshops are posted on www.coloradoagritourism.com. The Colorado Department of Agriculture has been actively involved with agritourism for a number of years and should remain the CTO's lead partner in product development and marketing.



The CDA has long established marketing tools and information portals that include

1. The Colorado Farm Fresh Directory online at (www.coloradoagriculture.com/farmfresh). Approximately 110,000 copies of this newsprint directory are printed annually for in-state distribution. In 2013, a mobile app will also be available.
2. Colorado Proud (www.coloradoproud.org) is statewide marketing program to promote food and other agricultural products that are grown, raised or processed in Colorado. Colorado Proud is product focused and does not currently include agritourism experiences. While participation in Colorado Proud is free, producers must register their products on Colorado Market Maker (www.comarketmaker.com). Market Maker breaks out agritourism activities as a product category and includes a mapping feature, but does not function as a tourism marketing site.
3. The CDA, CSU Extension, Colorado Farmers' Market Association and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment collaborate on the Colorado Farm to Market website at www.cofarmtomarket.com which was created "...to familiarize Colorado food producers and food product manufacturers with federal, state and local food licensing regulations and to help ensure that the path food travels from farm to fork is safe." The focus of this site has been on food producers and food product manufacturers, and the website currently does not specifically address regulations impacting agritourism businesses.

The Department of Agriculture also connects agritourism operators with grant opportunities. National grants that have been tapped successfully include the Farmers Market Promotion Program, USDA Rural Development Grants, the Specialty Crops Block Grant Program and the Value Added Producer Grants.

The Department of Agriculture's role is especially important in ongoing agritourism product development and the promotion of agritourism offerings to local and in-state audiences. This complements the CTO's primary focus on marketing to out-of-state travelers.

History Colorado

Grants from the Colorado State Historical Fund have provided \$900,000 over the past decade to develop heritage tourism at the statewide level. These efforts have helped fund the completion of a 5-year statewide heritage tourism plan; the creation of heritage tourism pilot regions; the development of an online database of Colorado's heritage attractions and the development of quality standards for heritage attractions. In addition, grants from the State Historical Fund have helped to preserve historic barns and other historic agricultural buildings across the state and History Colorado manages a Centennial Farms program that includes almost 400 historic farms and ranches statewide.

The State Historical Fund remains a viable source for matching funds (capped at \$200,000 a year for any project) for proposals that are tied to the built environment (historical buildings), landscapes and the cultural heritage of a given area. The next grant round is scheduled for October 1, 2013.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is in the process of building the Colorado Birding Trail, a series of guides that offer birdwatchers a combination of public and private habitats. Fifty private farms and local ranches in the Southeast, Southwest and Northwest sections of the state have agreed to open their property to bird watchers for a fee. John Koshak, Watchable Wildlife Coordinator, estimates that the number of participating farms will double when the Northeastern sector is open, as this area has sparse public lands.

This agency has partnered with CTO and travel regions throughout the state in a successful joint marketing program that buys advertising in the National Audubon Magazine. As enthusiasm in bird watching is shared by travelers interested in both heritage and agritourism, this program has provided an excellent opportunity for farmers and ranchers in more remote areas of Colorado to participate in the Colorado travel industry.

Additional Partners

Additional partners beyond these three primary agencies will be vital for the successful implementation of this strategic plan. Besides the partners identified in the chart above, potential agricultural partners include member organizations of the Colorado Ag Council as well the Colorado Farmers Market Association and regional local food groups such as the Central Colorado Foodshed Alliance and the San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition that are working actively to reach out to travelers in their regions. Heritage tourism regional groups will enrich existing itineraries with new opportunities for travelers, and are exceptionally positioned to promote new agritourism travel products.

"Agritourism signs wouldn't work for us because many of our agritourism attractions aren't open to the public on a really regular basis."

~ Lynn Dyer, Mesa Verde Country



CHAPTER SIX:

Connecting Agritourism and Heritage Tourism in Colorado

Agriculture is a vital part of Colorado's heritage. Both agritourism and heritage tourism offer opportunities to help preserve important components of Colorado's heritage, whether it is saving a significant historic building, revitalizing cultural traditions, and ways of life, or making it possible to keep farms, ranches and other land in agricultural use.

Current trends have led to strong growth in agricultural heritage experiences such as on-farm dinners, cheese-making classes, and the fiber arts. These experiences appeal to discriminating travelers with more discretionary income and a higher level of education—qualities that match up with the profile of Colorado's cultural heritage traveler.

Colorado's heritage and agritourism attractions offer complementary experiences that help create a critical mass of things for travelers to do in rural areas. Typically both types of attractions have limited budgets and need to fit into a larger system to have their voices heard. Many of these smaller rural operations also lack experience in tourism marketing. Colorado is currently the only state in the country with a joint heritage and agritourism program that addresses these marketing needs, although Kansas does have a staff person who divides her time between the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and the scenic byways program.

National research by Mandala Research in 2009 and 2013 reports that cultural heritage travelers like to sample traditional artisan products, visiting farms and ranches, experiencing local or regional cuisine, attending food and wine festivals, touring wineries or breweries and visiting farmers markets. Research completed by Longwoods in 2012 for the Colorado Tourism Office found that Colorado's travelers are more likely to take in a landmark or historic site, museum or brewery on their Colorado vacation than travelers to other states in the U.S. Three in ten Colorado vacationers indicated they were specifically interested in historic places, and almost as many indicated they had an interest in cultural activities and attractions.

As Colorado looks at ways to promote agritourism and heritage tourism experiences, the words "agritourism" and "heritage tourism" may be less important than the underlying concept of experiencing Colorado's real and authentic heritage through the seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and last but not least, tasting. Travelers interested in heritage experiences probably do not identify themselves as a "heritage traveler," nor do travelers interested in agritourism identify themselves as an "agritourism traveler," but both groups are indeed explorers.

Lessons Learned from Colorado's Heritage Tourism

Many of the recommendations in this strategic plan have been informed by the successes and lessons learned from CTO's decade of experience with a statewide Heritage Tourism Program. In 2006 the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) commissioned a Strategic Plan for Colorado Heritage Tourism Enhancement. The plan was funded by the Colorado Historical Society and based its strategies on four "pillars:" 1) That past investments in preservation and conservation have created a strong foundation for heritage tourism; 2) That Colorado's renown as a world class recreation destination provided a considerable foundation for the development of heritage tourism; 3) that partnerships between federal, state, and regional heritage tourism efforts would be key to success, and 4) that heritage tourism would be vulnerable to funding shortfalls.

Strategies addressed the need to address quality in visitor experiences and the need to add wayfinding elements and other infrastructure to improve the experience for the touring sector of travelers. Other major challenges included the stewardship of historic assets and community resolve to continue the process of product development.

Significant progress has been made over the past seven years in adding high quality visitor experiences, especially in seven heritage regions of the state. Leadership was provided by a program manager at CTO, and a program launch with four pilot programs in the Southeast, Southwest, San Luis Valley and Park County. Two of these regions now have earned congressional designations as National Heritage Areas (NHA)—Park County NHA and the Sangre de Cristo NHA. All four have established regional heritage tourism websites and published high quality brochures, counter maps and other high quality marketing materials. A database of nearly 500 heritage sites in the state was developed, each with historical accuracy vetted by a historian. This information is now available to the media, to tourism professionals, and to those developing travel itineraries.

Scott Campbell, the program's first program manager, believes that the strongest achievement of the initial four pilot regions was their ability to leverage initial investments into additional projects. In the Southeast region now known as Canyons and Plains, the first \$130,000 from Preserve America was leveraged over the following six years into over one million dollars in additional funding for the development and marketing of heritage tourism. This group has partnered actively with the National Park Service and the US Forest Service. Both agencies manage major public assets in the region.

Representatives from Canyons and Plains also serve on advisory and governing boards their major state partners, namely History Colorado, The Colorado Tourism Board, and Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways.

"Colorado has a strong heritage and tradition in agriculture. To create ranches and farms, we had to harvest timber, clear the forests and build irrigation ditches. It is all tied together by culture and traditions into one bundle of outdoor activities."

~ Dick Ray, Past President of Colorado Outfitters Association



The Southwest Travel Region was able to invest their original \$153,000 in marketing materials that dramatically increased the scope of heritage attractions. The region has long been identified with their two iconic heritage attractions: 1) Mesa Verde National Park and 2) The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railway. The attention to other heritage sites and inclusion in regional and state marketing materials has resulted in a change of the image of the region that now includes dozens of new attractions in communities throughout the region.

This product development evolved into agricultural heritage during the same time period, and the region is also now well known for the same two heritage anchor sites, and also mine tours, wine tours and farm dinners as well. The latest success is the designation of Chimney Rock near Pagosa Springs as a National Monument.

Laura Libby, the second program director of heritage tourism, noted that the other major accomplishment of the heritage tourism program was the steady integration of heritage into all the marketing tools of the CTO. On colorado.com, the state's portal site for tourism, heritage tourism images and experiences are not separated, but integrated throughout the site. Heritage is also integrated into itineraries, press releases, special events and festival. It has added depth and breadth to the tourism offerings throughout the state.

The development of heritage tourism is a Colorado tourism success story. These lessons, including 1) insistence on quality, 2) extensive and active public/private partnerships and 3) leveraging every dollar gained will be adopted as the management underpinnings of the new agritourism initiatives. Communities throughout the state need to continue transforming Colorado's heritage assets—historic sites, heritage stories, and historic artifacts—into active and interactive experiences for travelers of every ilk.

Many of the heritage tourism regions created through the CTO's Heritage Tourism Program offer the organizational capacity to lead regional product development and marketing efforts for agritourism, in addition to Colorado's National Heritage Areas and scenic byways. Regional heritage tourism efforts in Colorado offer additional opportunities for new agritourism clusters to work within existing frameworks.

As the recommendations in the plan are implemented, there should be opportunities for History Colorado and other partners to capitalize on the strong linkages in audience as well as programmatic needs between agritourism and heritage tourism. Partners with an interest in heritage that have an ability to bring additional staff and financial resources can help expand parallel heritage tourism components for many of the agritourism recommendations in this plan.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Local Food and Beverages

Food is the life blood of agritourism. In the last decade, interest in local and regional cuisine has swept the country, creating a myriad of entrepreneurs in its wake. A sampling of the players is reflected in Edible Portland's annual Local Food Heroes Awards. Honorees included a nonprofit that trains young farmers, a bakery that uses regional ingredients, a food artisan (Bee Keeper), a beverage artisan (Ft George Brewery), a co-op grocer who seeks out seasonal produce and local suppliers, and a nonprofit called Friends of Family Farms. Complex networks like these are the underpinnings of every local food system.

Travelers are keen to connect with local foods, and an increasing number of Americans are traveling to eat. Fine dining establishments are not the only beneficiaries in this quest for food that helps tell the distinctive story of a place. These foods are now found frequently in food trucks (think Austin Texas), local diners, and farmers markets.

In most communities the connectors between travelers and locally sourced food are restaurants. In Alamosa, the local brewery estimates that 15% of the food it serves is "local" and aims to double that percentage this year. The members of San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition have been providing quality foods to each other in a movement toward food sustainability, and now aims to connect with travelers as a new source of profitability.

Food related festivals have long been established throughout Colorado and provide another way to experience local food. Festivals range from the Potato Fest (Monte Vista), to Strawberry Days (Glenwood Springs), to the Peach Festival (Palisade), the Chili & Frijoles Festival (Pueblo), the Mushroom Foray (Creede), the Sweet Corn Festival (Olathe), the Apple Fest (Buena Vista), Sugar Beet Days (Sterling), and the Greeley Beef Fest (Greeley).

Barley growers in the San Luis Valley are also profiting from the local demand for sourced food and beverage. Jason Cody, owner of the Colorado Malting Company, noted in the Pueblo Chieftain (4-14-13) that his company has grown from shipping 400 pounds of malted barley a week in 2009 to over 12,000 pounds per week in 2013. Cody noted that the majority of his customers are Colorado craft brewers who want to tout a product made with local ingredients.

Pueblo is the one community which has a logo that leads with food – the chili pepper. Many other communities could offer food to introduce travelers to the cultural stories of their communities. The Southern Rockies Heritage Region is planning to do just that: The German story in Westcliffe, the Italian story in Trinidad, the Slovenian story in Canon City.

At the state level, the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Colorado Proud program was created in 1999 to promote food and agricultural products grown, raised or processed in Colorado to consumers, restaurants and retailers. Colorado Proud has more than 1,700 members statewide, and Colorado Proud products can be found at farmers markets, restaurants as well as being sold in groceries and other retail outlets.



CHAPTER EIGHT:

Strategic Approach and Recommendations

1) Inventory of Agritourism Attractions

The CTO will compile and update information from several different existing agritourism databases into a format that is compatible with Colorado.com. This can be accomplished either by electronically importing data or by hiring a data entry person to manually import information about visitor ready attractions from existing sources including Market Maker, the Colorado Heritage Attractions database and databases from different sectors such as the Wine Board.

2) Marketing , Public Relations and Social Media

The CTO will develop a public relations and social media plan to promote Colorado's visitor ready agritourism attractions that help to create clusters in rural portions of the state. Interested partners at the statewide level will have the opportunity to leverage the state's investment in promoting agritourism by providing additional funding for marketing aspects of agritourism. Agritourism will also have a more robust presence on colorado.com, with listings that reflect the full spectrum of attractions in this niche market.

3) Regional Roadshows

The CTO will coordinate regional roadshows across the state which will offer bus tours to promote successful agritourism operations, and offer on-the-spot education and training. Participants will be briefed on the marketing and product development opportunities outlined in this strategic plan. Following the completion of the regional roadshows in year one, a program evaluation will determine if additional roadshows should be offered in years 2 and 3.

4) Online Resources for the Industry

To supplement existing agritourism resources at www.coloradoagritourism.com maintained by the Department of Agriculture, the CTO will develop a more robust section in the Industry Partners section of colorado.com with online resources about how to market agritourism attractions and businesses. The Industry Partners section of colorado.com will include prominent links to and from related online resources such as www.coloradoagritourism.com.

5) Peer Mentors

The CTO will develop a peer mentor program based on the successful model established by the Colorado Creative Industries Peer Assistance Network (PAN) program. To extend the areas of expertise available through the peer mentor program, the CTO will identify key statewide partner organizations as lead partners. Potential peer mentors will be identified and will attend a training session. Peer mentors can provide assistance by phone, or can provide on-site assistance for a modest fee that is partially underwritten by the peer mentor program. Peer mentors will be paid based on services provided.

6) Matching Grants for Agritourism

A pool of funds will be available for matching grants to promote agritourism and to promote the continuing development of agritourism in Colorado. Visitor-ready agritourism clusters can apply for marketing grants to promote multiple agritourism attractions in one geographic region to out of state and/or in-state travelers. Preference will be given to applications with links to rural areas. Whenever possible, marketing grants should create direct connections between farmers or ranchers and travelers. Emerging agritourism attractions can apply for matching grants to promote the development of new or enhanced agritourism attractions. Grants for emerging heritage attractions can be used to support tourism product development activities such as agritourism training workshops for geographic clusters or providing assistance with agritourism highway signage.

7) Quality Standards

The online resources will include a self assessment tool for Colorado's agritourism businesses modeled after the Colorado Heritage Tourism Quality Standards. This self assessment tool can be used by existing and emerging agritourism attractions, and can also provide a framework for peer mentor assistance or site visit assessments by an outside expert.

8) Address Regulatory Barriers Inhibiting Agritourism

Legislation at the state and county level can either help or hinder efforts to develop new agritourism operations. Legal research will help compare Colorado's statewide legislation with comparable legislation in other states to determine if additional legislation would be desirable. Additional research can help to identify model land use legislation at the county level. As appropriate, grassroots private supporters can work with elected officials to pursue changes.



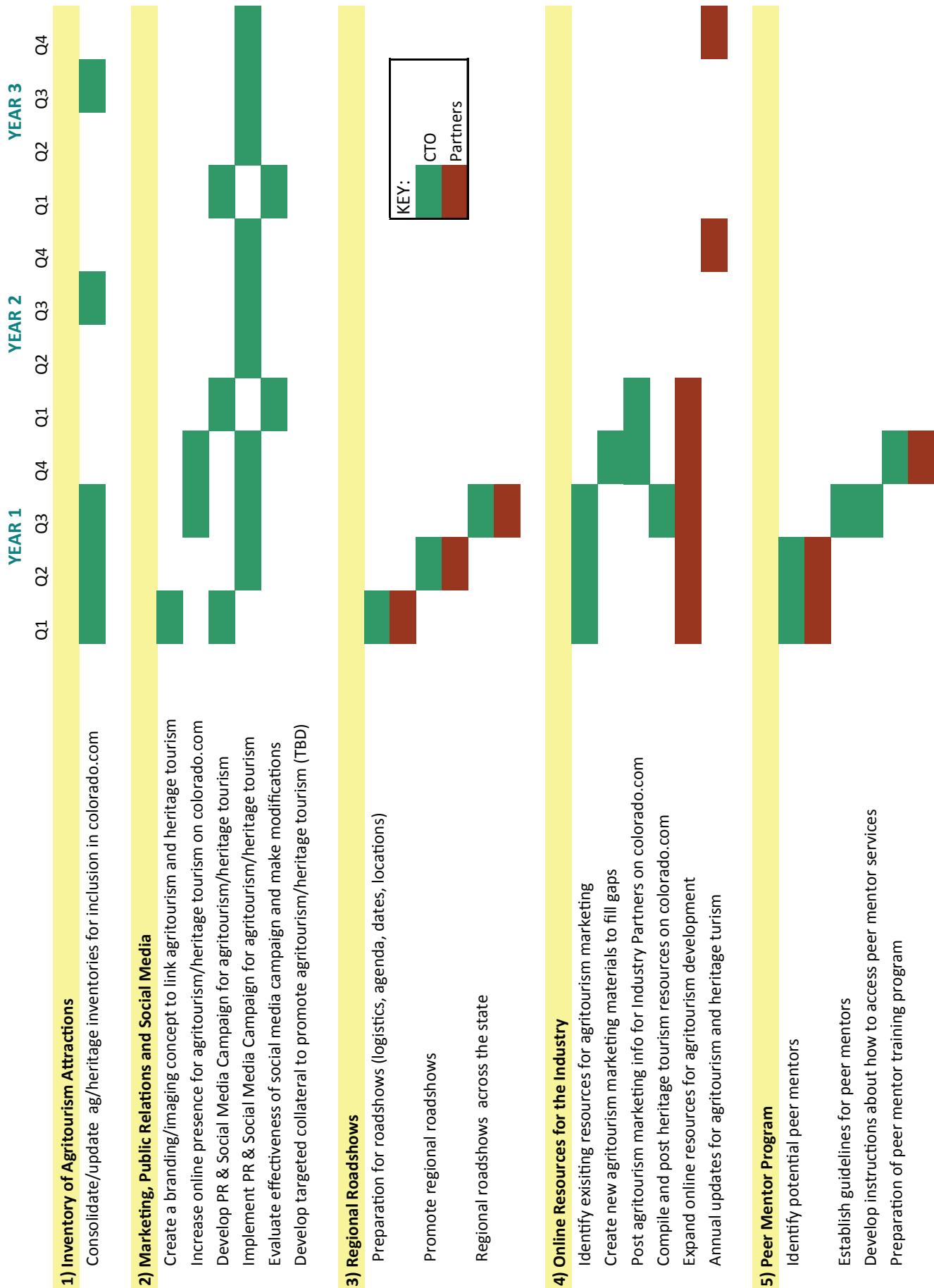
CHAPTER EIGHT: Strategic Approach and Recommendations

Colorado Agritourism Recommendations		
	ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:	RECOMMENDATION:
1) Inventory Agritourism Resources	<p>CTO is currently vetting existing lists of agritourism travel products. The CO Dept of Agriculture lists agritourism attractions in Market Maker, and there is a second database with more extensive listings.</p> <p>Some industry sectors maintain databases of visitor experiences (for example, the Wine Board and the Brewers Guild) but there is currently no way to upload vetted lists such as this to colorado.com—sites need to be updated individually. In the field, there is frustration that the same information needs to be updated in multiple locations.</p> <p>An online Colorado Heritage Database has been developed that includes vetted information about 500 sites statewide including some agritourism sites, yet there currently is no capacity to add new sites, update the database, or upload the information from this site to colorado.com.</p>	<p>a) Explore potential opportunities to electronically upload vetted information from existing databases to a format that is compatible with colorado.com. If it is not possible to do this electronically, manually transfer information from these databases to a format that is compatible with colorado.com</p> <p>b) Update and complete a comprehensive inventory of visitor-ready agritourism attractions in Colorado from existing databases.</p> <p>c) Secure, maintain and update information about the state's visitor-ready agritourism attractions to ensure that the information in the database stays current.</p>
2) Marketing, Public Relations and Social Media	<p>The name "agritourism" didn't resonate with industry stakeholders.</p> <p>While heritage attractions can be found statewide, Colorado's visitor-ready agritourism destinations are currently clustered geographically near population centers or resort communities.</p> <p>Colorado.com currently has limited visibility for agritourism attractions. Agritourism appears as one of 19 categories along with one for Wineries and one for Breweries under Things to Do/Attractions, and only 18 attractions are listed.</p>	<p>Focus on authentic, real Colorado. This is a perfect fit with heritage and outdoor recreation markets. Showcase visitor-ready experiences that have appeal in all 3 target markets. Position Colorado as a leading agritourism destination.</p> <p>Build on existing strong clusters of visitor-ready agritourism attractions for initial agritourism marketing efforts with a strong focus on public relations and social media strategies. Support emerging new offerings in rural areas with peer mentors and access to training and education.</p> <p>Create a more robust visibility for agritourism attractions with more capabilities for searching and cross referencing by travelers. Populate with vetted information from the inventory of agritourism resources.</p>

CHAPTER EIGHT: Strategic Approach and Recommendations

Colorado Agritourism Recommendations		
	ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY:	RECOMMENDATION:
Marketing, Public Relations and Social Media	There is widespread frustration from tourism suppliers who have attempted to enter data into free listings on colorado.com.	Make the process of self-entry easier for agritourism suppliers.
3) Regional Roadshows	Colorado's agritourism offerings are diverse, and vary tremendously from region to region across the state. A few regions have mature agritourism programs, yet others are in the beginning stages. Colorado needs additional product development.	Develop one-day events tailored to the needs in each region to give potential agritourism operators a change to see in person what is working and take away information to help build their own program for travelers. Conduct technical tours to inspire new product development, and provide bite size training sessions. Training will also provide the chance to tap into peer mentors and industry partners.
4) Online Resources for the Industry	The Colorado Dept of Ag has online information (including PPTs from past workshops) available on the Dept of Ag website.	Create a more robust section on colorado.com with joint online resources for both heritage and agritourism in the "Industry Partners" section of colorado.com. Include a prominent link to the resources available online through the CO Dept of Ag. As new online resources are developed, use the CO Dept of Ag for agritourism development resources and development and heritage/agritourism marketing.
5) Peer Mentors	Farmers and ranchers expressed a desire to learn from farmers who have real life business experience in agritourism.	Create a peer mentor program modeled on the Colorado Creative Industries Peer Advisory Network. In most cases, mentor opportunities will work by phone. Peer mentors will receive training in how to provide assistance and will be paid for services rendered.
6) Matching Grants	Colorado's diverse geography and varied levels of heritage and agritourism development make a "one size fits all" program impractical. Rather than dictate, generate from grassroots. People shape training to meet their needs.	Create a matching grant program to help promote existing visitor-ready attractions and strengthen emerging attractions. Matching grants will leverage available funding and allow investment to take advantage of local creativity and be tailored to meet local needs. Guidelines will require collaboration, link ag producers with consumers, and encourage partnerships between agritourism and heritage tourism.
7) Quality Standards	Emerging agritourism attractions, especially those in remote rural areas, need assistance with tourism product development and promotion. Existing standards that have been developed for heritage tourism in Colorado could easily be adapted for agritourism, and additional agritourism assessment tools have already been developed by other states.	Reserve a portion of the matching grant funds for training workshops, site assessments, highway signage or other product development assistance to emerging clusters. Adapt the existing heritage tourism quality standards as a self-assessment tool, and develop a companion agritourism self-assessment tool building from the heritage tourism standards and other existing agritourism assessment tools.
8) Liability	Colorado has limited liability legislation for ag recreation, but no stand-alone limited liability legislation for agritourism	Complete legal research to compare Colorado's legislation to other states, and identify private grass-roots champions to carry the message to state legislators.

CHAPTER NINE: A Three-Year Action Plan for the Promotion of Colorado's Agritourism - Part 1



CHAPTER NINE: A Three-Year Action Plan for the Promotion of Colorado's Agritourism - Part 2

