



# Farmer Veteran Coalition California, Inc

08.08.2023

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Farmer Veteran Coalition California, Inc

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## Executive Summary

The chapter organizing committee of the proposed Farmer Veteran Coalition California, Inc. (FVCCA) is committed to creating a relevant, robust and active FVC state chapter. The activities of the provisional chapter staff and board to date has included a well thought out needs assessment to help guide chapter activities. Three focus areas emerged from the needs assessment and this strategic plan specifically addresses needs identified.

## Mission and Guiding Principles

1. Mission: The Farmer Veteran Coalition of California, Inc. (FVCCA) is uniting veterans to feed California.
  - a. Mission as directed by FVC in the Chapter Affiliation and License Agreement
    - i. Promote and support the transition of veterans of the United States Armed Forces into the agriculture industry within the State of California
    - ii. Promote and encourage the growth of membership in the Chapter and in the Coalition of farmer-veterans within the state of California
  - b. Provide charitable and educational assistance to disabled and at-risk veterans of the United States Armed Forces as well as to active and reserve duty members and the Guard, or reserve components thereof who are seeking to transition into the agriculture industry.
    - i. Provide technical, professional, and economic assistance to disabled and at-risk veterans of the United States Armed Forces seeking to transition into the agriculture industry.
2. We:
  - **BELIEVE** in the skills and innovations of California farmer veterans
  - **PROMOTE** personal responsibility and initiative
  - **EXEMPLIFY** integrity and stewardship

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- **COMMIT** to leveraging and collaborating with our network of industry, educational partners and farmer veteran mentors
  - **RECOGNIZE** the importance of nurturing a sense of community among veterans



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Figure 1. Mission and guiding principles of the Farmer Veteran Coalition California, Inc. Chapter

## SWOT Analysis

Despite its vast geographical size and diversity of agricultural products in California, we believe that the extensive networks, worthy cause, and dedicated membership will translate any perceived weaknesses and threats into strengths and opportunities. Figure 2 highlights our analysis of the environment in which the California chapter will thrive.

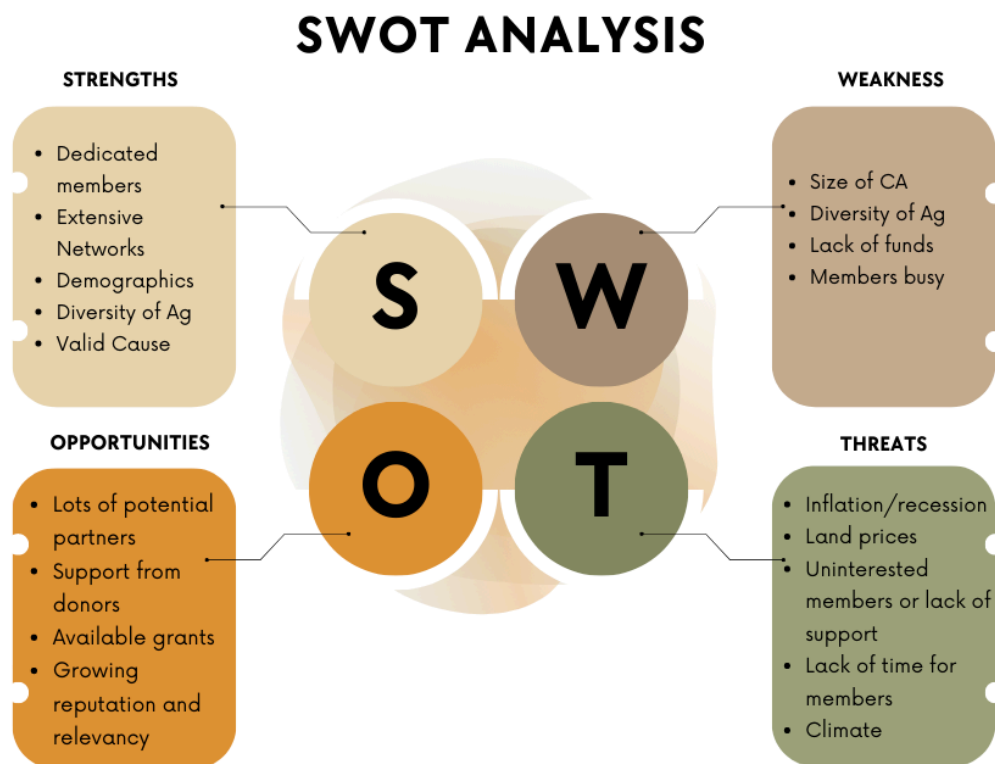



Figure 2. SWOT Analysis

## Current Activities

During the month of March 2023, the provisional board of directors for FVCCA conducted a Farmer Veteran Needs Assessment. The survey instrument asked a series of questions to determine a baseline understanding of the needs of



respondents in several areas of farming business risk: Farming, Family, Finances, Future and Fitness. The organization received 117 responses that form the basis of this strategic plan, which represents just 5% of the California National FVC membership. Despite the low response rate, we feel the following goals, focus areas and objectives are in-line with the larger farmer veteran population in California. Chapter leadership is dedicated to conducting periodic surveys to ensure and adjust objectives as required.

Out of 117 respondents:

1. 82.9% are male, and 93% are owner/operators of their agricultural operation.
2. 35 respondents each identified the Army and Marine Corps as their branches of service, with Navy (30, Air Force (20) and Coast Guard (3) represented.
3. 54.7% of the respondents are currently involved in production agriculture
4. 30.8% of the respondents have net farm earnings as a source of income, and 72.6% receive disability payments from the VA. Of that 72.6% that receive VA disability payments, 43.1% have a 100% disability rating.
5. 39.3% have off-farm jobs and 19.7% receive retirement income.
6. Respondents identified fruit crops or orchards, market garden, poultry, sheep/goats, and honey as the majority of agricultural products they currently produce. Market garden, fruit crops or orchards, honey production, organic certification, value-added production, poultry, and sheep/goats were identified as enterprises that respondents wanted to learn more about.
7. When asked about educational and technical support, respondents wanted to learn more about the following categories that received the highest requests: production-related needs for crops, farm/ranch management, sustainable agriculture, dry farming, organic farming, and farm diversification.
8. Regarding networking, respondents desire farmer veteran in-person conferences, farm tours designed for veterans, team building events, and agricultural support networks.
9. In the realm of business and financial planning, respondents have a need for learning how to apply for grants, obtaining loans, insurance and permits, Licenses and certifications, and economic counseling services such as developing a business plan.
10. Respondents desire to learn more about pricing products, developing a marketing plan, exploring new market options and branding.

11. Peer support and emotional intelligence/social skills building are emotional support categories that respondents desire to learn more about.
12. Respondents are interested in learning more about leasing equipment and improving their farm/ranch environment.
13. Learning more about estate and tax planning, and business formation are high on respondents' needs.
14. 80.5% of respondents indicated that they like digital newsletters and information sent via email or text, 56.6% like in-person classes and workshops, and 54% also like online self-paced learning.
15. Respondents are moderately stressed about illness or disease of livestock or crops, noxious weeds, and rodents, as well as insufficient manpower, and unpredictable weather.
16. Respondents are moderately stressed about balancing their many roles as family member and farmer/rancher, as well as finding time for recreation.
17. Financially, respondents are moderately stressed about the political changes and how it might affect trade policies and farm-related legislation, supply shortages, market instability and how to finance farm activities, as well as price inflation.
18. Less than one quarter of respondents are moderately stressed about long term sustainability and farm succession.
19. Anxiety and hearing loss are moderate concerns for respondents as well as lifting heavy loads, dealing with a chronic injury, and sleep deprivation or disorder.

## Goal

The overarching goal of FVCCA is to be an organization that provides resources, support and nurtures resiliency to mitigate farming risk within a “5 F’s” construct: Farming, Family, Finances, Future, and Fitness.

Each focus area, as informed by the CA Farmer Veteran Needs Assessment conducted in March 2023, addresses at least one or more of the 5 F’s of farming risk.

## Focus Areas - based on 2023 needs assessment results

### Focus Area 1: Education & Training

- a. **Farming:** market garden, fruit crops or orchards, honey production, organic certification, value-added production, raising poultry, and sheep/goats; farm/ranch management, sustainable agriculture, dry farming, organic farming, and farm diversification;
- b. **Family:** balancing roles as a family member and farmer/rancher, as well as finding time for recreation;
- c. **Finance:** Applying for grants, obtaining loans, insurance, permits, licenses and certifications, developing a business plan, and pricing products;
- d. **Future:** developing a marketing plan, exploring new market options and branding, estate and tax planning, farm succession planning, and business formation;
- e. **Fitness:** Anxiety, hearing preservation, lifting heavy loads, dealing with a chronic injury, and sleep deprivation or disorder.

### Focus Area 2: Funding

- a. Finance the running of the Chapter as necessary (i.e. bookkeeper, or staff compensation)
- b. Chapter support activities (i.e. in-person team building and networking events, educational training opportunities)
- c. Fellowship funds to support chapter member enterprises

### Focus Area 3: Networking & Outreach

- a. Develop a robust and active membership to meet the socialization, networking, and educational needs of our members.
- b. Sponsor and manage farmer veteran in-person conferences, farm tours designed for veterans, team building events, and agricultural support networks.
- c. Communicate with members via digital newsletters, on farm and in-person events, and informational webinars as appropriate

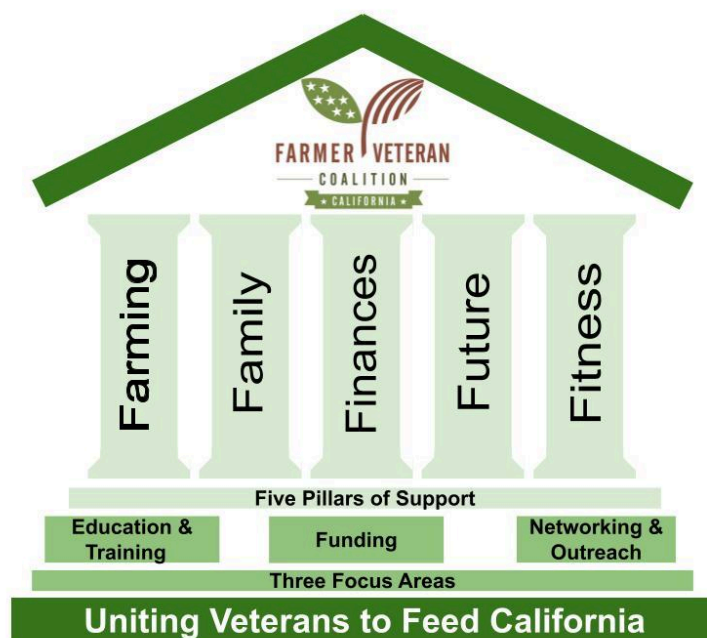


Figure 3. Mission, Focus Areas and Pillars of Support

## Focus Area Objectives and Milestones

### Focus Area 1: Education and Training

Topic	Year 1 Milestones	Year 2 Milestones
<b>Business planning</b>	Provide awareness and access to business planning resources available to all who desire them.	Provide awareness and access to business planning resources available to all who desire them.
<b>Production</b>	Seek out or generate and inform members of existing Market Garden & Fruit orchard, Crop planning/management education opportunities.	Seek out or generate and inform members of existing honey, poultry and value-added education opportunities.
<b>Licensing and Certifications</b>	Seek out or generate and inform members of existing Organic certification, insurance & permits information classes.	Seek out or generate and inform members of existing Agri-tourism education opportunities.
<b>Raising Capital (economic counseling/grants/loans/crowdf</b>	Seek out or generate and inform members of courses that teach	Seek out or generate and inform members of courses that focus on



Topic	Year 1 Milestones	Year 2 Milestones
<b>Funding</b>	Applying for loans & grants	Economic counseling (enterprise budgeting, cash flow analysis, etc)
<b>Marketing/branding</b>	Seek out of develop programming that focuses on Pricing (cost of production) and developing a marketing plan	Develop programming that focuses on Branding & expanding markets

## Focus Area 2: Funding

Topic	Year 1 Milestones	Year 2 Milestones
<b>Events</b>	Host a regional (4 regions) kick-off in person event upon Chapter formation - provide donation opportunities	Hold a state-wide in person conference. Host 2 in-person farm events per region - 8 total. Provide donation opportunities.
<b>Grants</b>	Identify grant opportunities and prepare for Year 2 applications	Apply for available and accessible grants to support chapter activities
<b>Banks</b>	Establish partnerships with 1 Ag-related bank and seek donations/funding opportunities	Establish partnerships with 3 Ag-related banks and seek donations/funding opportunities
<b>Industry partners</b>	Establish partnerships with 3 Ag-industry organizations and seek donations/support	Establish partnerships with 6 Ag-industry organizations and seek donations/support
<b>Social Media</b>	Activate and develop SM campaign for Facebook and Instagram, Include in-state donation opportunities	Increase social media posting and response activity by 40%
<b>Chapter Operations (website, admin, etc)</b>	Establish website with in-state donation opportunities	Maintain active website with in-state donation opportunities

## Focus Area 3: Networking and Outreach

Topic	Year 1 Milestones	Year 2 Milestones
<b>In-person farm visit</b>	Host a regional (4 regions) kick-off in person event upon Chapter formation	Hold a state-wide in person conference. Host 2 in-person farm events per region - 8 total.

<b>Industry partnerships</b>	Develop 4 regional industry partnerships	Develop 8 regional industry partnerships
<b>Generate membership from events</b>	Membership drive at inaugural kick off on-farm event to celebrate chapter formation	Continue membership drives
<b>Military transition</b>	Leverage FVC National's relationships with TAP/TAMP/SkillsBridge	Attend in-person entrepreneurial track of CA based transition programs
<b>Board development</b>	Nominating committee to recruit board members with identified needed areas of expertise.	Develop on-boarding policies and practices
<b>Social Media (outreach)</b>	Develop a website, create a quarterly newsletter; and consistently utilize LinkedIn, Insta, FB to generate awareness and interest in the chapter.	Expand upon success and communicate with membership positions to develop blogs & podcasts.
<b>Attend Ag-related events</b>	Attend 4 regional industry partner events	Attend 8 regional industry partner events

## Organization

### Executive committee

President: Ana Quiles (Mana Nursery Inc. , Marine Corps veteran spouse)

Vice President: Ron Cooper (Rosie's Ranch, U.S. Navy)

Treasurer: Shauna Holland

Secretary: Anne Martin (U.S. Marine Corps)

Comms Director: John Vargas (U.S. Army)

### Board of Directors

President of the Board: Ana Quiles

Vice President of the Board: Ronald Cooper

Treasurer: Shauna Holland

Secretary: Anne Martin

Communications Director: John Vargas

Board Member: Jose Silva

Board Member: John Bushoven

Board Member: Daniel Taverner

Board Member: Elizabeth Yeo

Honorary Board Member: Len Monaco

## Advisory Board

Committed:

Ken Prewitt

Michael O’Gorman

Ken Merchant

Rob Barnett

Isa Marie McIntyre

Kenney Enney

## Regional Directors

Utilizing Regional districts as defined by the California National Resources Conservation Service identified in Figure 4, FVCCA will decentralize activities such as in-person farm visits based on four defined geographic areas. Regional directors will be responsible for communicating and facilitating regionally-specific opportunities with and for their area membership. The state chapter leadership will work with regional directors to identify and facilitate overarching statewide needs with a regional focus.

### Area 1 Counties

Del Norte, Siskiyou, Modoc, Humboldt, Trinity, Shasta, Lassen, Plumas, Western Sierra, Butte, Yuba Sutter, Colusa, Glen, Yolo, Lake, and Mendocino

### Area 2 Counties

Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, San Francisco Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda,

### Area 3 Counties

Eastern Sierra, Nevada Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Alpine, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mono, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, Kern, Madera, Merced, Mariposa,

### Area 4 Counties

Imperial, San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Ventura, Inyo



Figure 4. FVC CA Regional areas

### Initial Committees

Executive: Ana Quiles President, Ron Cooper Vice President, Anne Martin Secretary, Shauna Holland Treasurer, John Vargas Communications Director

Education and Training: Anne Martin, Ken Prewitt, John Bushoven

Nominating: Anne Martin, Ken Prewitt

Network and Outreach: John Vargas, Ana Quiles

Funding: Shauna Holland, Jose Silva

## External Partners

### Existing Relationships

The following organizations have previously identified a desire to partner with an active California chapter of FVC.

1. National Resources Conservation Services
2. CSU Fresno
3. Veteran Business Outreach Center
4. Center for Land Based Learning
5. Archi's Acres
6. Almond Board of California
7. Farm Credit
8. John Deere
9. Kubota
10. ProAg
11. Rabobank
12. Citris, UC Merced

### Cultivate relationships

The following organizations are those with which we would like to establish a relationship.

1. University of California Cooperative Extension
2. Cal Poly
3. Cal Vet
4. Vocational Rehabilitation (VA and DOL)
5. California AgrAbility
6. SCORE/SBDC

## Final comments

The board of directors of the provisional CA chapter of FVC is dedicated to executing the plan as outlined above. With a laser focus on responding to the stated needs of our membership, we believe that our construct of using three focus areas (Education & Training, Financing, and Networking & Outreach) across 5 pillars of risk mitigation (Farming, Family, Finances, Future and Fitness) place us in a position of addressing and providing relevant and timely support. We recognize and embrace the diverse nature of California's many agricultural regions and will take a regional approach to address those varied needs. Many industry partners who support veteran causes have been anticipating an FVC CA chapter for many years. With their help, along with the energy and stated need of the current chapter leadership and its members, the California chapter will be active, relevant and a model for other states to emulate.