Agricultural operations face many of the same challenges that other types of business do—and they encounter some unique obstacles and opportunities, as well. In August of 2017, USDA and SCORE joined forces to help new farming and ranching operations and other agriculture related businesses navigate the challenges of launching and growing their businesses. We are excited about sharing in the mission to help entrepreneurs in the agriculture industry thrive. By providing mentoring and sharing information, we hope to provide help toward a firm foundation upon which to build your business.

Because knowing where to begin is often one of the biggest stumbling blocks for aspiring business owners, I will suggest the three mission-critical to-dos you’ll need to tackle to move your business forward.

**First things First: Learn About What’s Ahead of You.**

Critical to launching a successful agricultural business is to learn what will be involved. From accessing land and funding to fulfilling tax obligations to environmental and safety regulations and other requirements, you must gain an understanding of all the responsibilities that come with running an agricultural business. The USDA website offers some helpful insight and educational resources to help you understand what you need to consider. Also, try to connect with others who have started a similar type of business and are willing to share some of the perks and pitfalls they experienced in their entrepreneurial journey.

**Get Your Ducks in a Row.**

By writing a business plan for your business, you will have a roadmap to follow as you tackle the many startup tasks ahead of you. Your business plan should address all the essential aspects of starting and running your company. It might include the following sections and others:
Leverage Available Resources.

Fortunately, you don’t have to go it alone when starting your business because several organizations and resources exist to help you along your way.

First and foremost, as I mentioned above, visit the USDA’s website to sign up for free business mentoring from a SCORE mentor. Use this web address (https://newfarmers.usda.gov/mentorship).

Next, use USDA’s online Discovery Tool, which suggests resources based on information you input about yourself, where you want to locate your business, what you want to farm, your business model and what you need assistance with.

Also, be sure to check out the information and assistance offered by the U.S. Small Business Administration. On the agency’s website, you can glean helpful tips from its business guide and learn about the funding programs that might help you secure a loan or find investors for your business.
Other organizations that can offer assistance and information are:

Internal Revenue Service (including its tax tips section for agricultural businesses)
America’s Small Business Development Centers (including their e-learning courses)

And don’t forget that SCORE’s website has a library of articles, webinars, and guides with insight about starting and running a business. You will also find templates that you can download and use as you develop your business plan, product pricing, sales projections, financial statements and more.

Contact SCORE or the USDA about getting the expert startup guidance you need to succeed.

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