

STRATEGICALLY ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS IN  
TIMES OF FINANCIAL AND LEGAL DISTRESS

by

LANA ANN SWENDSON

B.S., Kansas State University, 2011

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Communications and Agricultural Education  
College of Agriculture

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2013

Approved by:

Major Professor  
Dr. Lauri M. Baker

# **Copyright**

LANA ANN SWENDSON

2013

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to identify the needs of Kansas' agricultural producers in relation to financial and legal matters at a local level. The following research questions guided this study: 1) what services, identified by local producers, are needed in communities across Kansas to assist producers in times of financial and legal distress; 2) what are the perceptions among producers of the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS); 3) what brand attributes, names, and taglines would appeal to producers for an organization addressing their financial and legal distress; 4) how can organizations effectively market financial and legal services to producers? A qualitative study design was used in order to assess the research questions. Six focus groups were performed throughout the state in three different geographic locations. Participants were selected using purposive sampling in order to have one group of people familiar with the organization (KAMS) currently helping producers with their legal and financial issues and one unfamiliar group in each location. Grunig's excellence in public relations model served as the conceptual framework for this study. Results of this study concluded that rural Kansas' communities see a need for service organizations similar to KAMS. Participants value assistance with family farm transition planning as well as financial assistance. Participants saw marketing and promotion of the current services offered just as critical as having the services themselves. Participants felt these services should be marketed through two-way communication channels, such as social media, an organizational representative for face-to-face interaction, and collaboration with extension. Additionally, participants voiced strong opinions about various brand attributes.

**Keywords:** Financial assistance, Legal assistance, Two-way communication, Family farm transition planning, Branding, Marketing

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	vii
List of Tables .....	viii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Dedication.....	x
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	6
Assumptions.....	6
Limitations .....	7
Definition of Key Terms.....	7
Summary.....	9
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	10
Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services .....	10
Other mediation services offered.....	11
Kansas State University Farm Analyst Program.....	12
Excellence in Public Relations Theory.....	13
Two-Way Symmetrical Model .....	15
Branding and Marketing.....	17
Distress of the Farmer.....	19
Summary.....	22
Chapter 3 - Methodology .....	23
Design of the Study.....	23
Screening Process and Subject Selection.....	24
Philosophical Assumptions and Biases.....	26
Procedure .....	26
Data Collection and Analysis .....	29
Summary of Methodology .....	30
Chapter 4 - Results.....	31

RQ1: Services Needed in Local Communities .....	31
Family farm transition planning.....	32
Marketing and promotion of KAMS.....	33
Financial assistance.....	34
RQ2: Perceptions of KAMS .....	35
Familiar groups. ....	36
Unfamiliar groups. ....	37
RQ3: Branding of KAMS .....	37
Brand names.....	37
Taglines for the brand. ....	38
Brand attributes. ....	39
Mediation. ....	39
Assistance. ....	39
Support.....	40
Free. ....	40
Other key words.....	40
RQ4: Marketing Services.....	41
Social media marketing.....	41
Organizational representative. ....	42
Extension collaboration. ....	43
Radio. ....	44
Other marketing opportunities. ....	44
Farm Service Agency collaboration.....	45
Summary .....	46
Chapter 5 - Conclusions.....	47
Conclusions.....	47
Services perceived as needed in Kansas communities.....	47
Perceptions of KAMS. ....	48
Brand attributes, names, and taglines.....	48
Marketing financial and legal services. ....	49
Discussion.....	49

Family farm transition planning.....	49
Marketing and promotions.....	50
Financial assistance.....	50
Perceptions of KAMS.....	51
Branding of KAMS.....	51
Marketing services.....	52
Recommendations.....	53
Theoretical.....	53
Practical.....	54
Professional.....	55
Recommendation for Future Research.....	56
Limitations of the Study.....	56
Chapter Summary.....	57
References.....	59
Appendix A - Institutional Review Board Application for Approval Form.....	66
Appendix B - Moderators Guide.....	76
Appendix C - Informed Consent Template.....	82

## **List of Figures**

Figure 2.1 – The Nested Nature of the Two-Generation Farm Family.....27

## **List of Tables**

Table 3.1 Demographics of Focus Groups.....	33
---	----

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you Dr. Lauri M. Baker for the patience, perseverance, guidance, and support you have shown me throughout my program. You have taught me more than how to perform respectable and useable research. Throughout my time with you, I have learned more than any book can teach. I have learned to take on the world with an open mind and friendly smile. You have taught me to always welcome new opportunities and to always seek to continue learning. I admire your elegance and class. I truly appreciate all the time and commitment you have given me.

To Dr. Kristina Boone and Dr. Shannon Washburn, thank you for your warm guidance as I complete my program of study. I appreciate always knowing I could turn to you at any moment for help and direction. Thank you for serving on my committee, providing insight, and improving my overall graduate experience.

To my fellow graduate students in 113, wow! Although our time has been short, I am blessed to have met lifelong friends. This has been a whirlwind adventure I will never forget. I love the humor shared throughout our office and the way we work together as a team.

To the Department of Communications and Agricultural Education, thank you for your help and support as your first graduate student. You all have been so cheerful and have helped make this the ultimate graduate experience. Thank you for providing guidance to the animal-science-gone-communications-student who didn't know any better.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the greatest gift God has given me, my family. Mom and Dad, where would I be without you? None of this would have been possible without your unconditional love and support. Jodi Lynn, God gave me more than a sister. He gave me a best friend. Your smile and confidence are an inspiration to us all. Caleb, you are such a blessing in my life. Thank you for always making me smile and holding me close. I cannot wait to spend the rest of my life by your side and start a family of our own.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Throughout the United States, production agriculturalists face struggles that impede their abilities to continue farming. The struggles today's farmers and ranchers face include financial distress, legal matters, and the succession and transition of the family farm (Rosenblatt, Nevaldine, & Titus, 1978; Walker, Walker, & MacLennan, 1986). Producers may find themselves in a dispute situation that leads to legal hearings (Bailey, 2004). Many of their struggles lead to feelings of failure, which is amplified due to the "proud" nature of the farmer (Kuehne, 2012). Because of current pressures facing family farms, it is likely farmers could use support and services provided by a state mediation service (Agricultural Mediation Program, 2013).

"The 2007 Census shows only 26.5 percent of all principle operators have been farming for less than 10 years, a decline of more than 10 percent since 1982" (2007 Census of Agriculture, 2012, p. 2). This reflects the decline in the number of young people seeking production agriculture as a career. Furthermore, the Census indicated almost 80% of younger operators entering farming are not farming full time; instead they are working off the farm to make enough money to farm (2007 Census of Agriculture, 2012). Additionally, the 2007 Census of Agriculture by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports "In 2002, 144,000 farms produced 75 percent of the value of U.S. agricultural production. In 2007, the number of farms that produced the same share of production declined to 125,000" (2007 Census of Agriculture, 2012, p. 1). With a declining number of new farm operators, more of those operators working off the farm, and reliance on fewer farms to produce a large amount of products, the future of farming in the United States is in question. Additional struggles face agricultural producers in Kansas. Nearly 39% of the farm operators across the state are age 65 years or older and almost 63% are above the age of 55, while there was a 22% increase in farmers 65 years or older nationwide. (2007 Census of Agriculture, 2012). This raises concern about transitioning farms, not just in Kansas but across the country (Sureshwaran & McAleer, 2008).

The complexity of farming is more than the work it takes to plant and harvest crops or to care for livestock (Vanclay, 2004). Vanclay (2004) described farming:

Farming becomes a way of life, a way of making a living, that acquires a meaning far deeper than almost any other occupational identity. In that sense, farming is a vocation. As a socio-cultural practice, it is governed, informed and regulated by social processes. (p. 213)

Farmers throughout the world model a unique behavior and personality commonly perceived as a high sense of pride. Oftentimes the land used for farming has been in the family for several generations. This can lead to emotional attachment to the land (Kuehne, 2012). Burton (2004) described the land as having an identity similar to the family itself due to the time and effort put into maintaining the land. Because the land becomes part of the family, being a family farmer carries a multitude of responsibility. Not only is this person expected to develop a personal identity, but they are to carry on the identity of the family farm. In addition to personal development, it is hard to distinguish the difference in work one generation has put into the farm in comparison to another (Burton, 2004; Kuehne, 2012).

The pressure, stress, and feeling of responsibility of maintaining the family farm can be an emotional burden on one individual attempting to salvage generations of family history in a challenging economy. In the development of the family farm, it has become more than “just land,” but an attachment and family member to the caretakers of it (Burton, 2004; Kuehne, 2012; Vanclay, 2004). This sense of family and embracement of the land lays a natural path for passing of the farm from one familial generation to the next (Kuehne, 2012). At times, this arrangement can lead to a two-generational farm family, in which the transfer of the operation is a gradual process from one generation to the next (Davis-Brown & Salamon, 1988). If the farm struggles to stay afloat during an economic downturn, no one wants to be responsible for laying the family farm to rest (Kuehne, 2012). The USDA, administered through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), provides grants to state mediation programs to help in these times of financial and legal distress (Bailey, 2004). FSA is designed to serve agricultural producers and partners utilizing agricultural programs (Farm Service Agency, 2013).

State mediation programs are developed to assist agricultural producers, their creditors, and other persons directly affected by the actions of the USDA to resolve disputes thereby reducing the participant's cost associated with administrative appeals, litigation,

and bankruptcy. The USDA Mediation Program gives farmers and ranchers a confidential way to resolve disputes involving farm loans, conservation programs, wetland determinations, rural water loan programs, grazing on national forest system lands, pesticides, and other issues determined by the Secretary of Agriculture. Mediation services can include counseling and financial analysis to prepare parties for the mediation session.

Agricultural mediation is a way of settling disputes within a producers own means. The program provides a neutral mediator that can sit down or work on the phone to resolve very sticky issues. Instead of years it can take for a case to filter through the courts, the mediation process generally takes a few meetings to complete (Bailey, 2004, para. 2-3).

The Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS) is the organization designed to serve farmers in the state of Kansas in this manner (Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The two-generational farm family can encompass a set of particular problems. "It is a unique family system in that family and economic roles overlap as both generations receive their livelihood from the same farm," (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991, p. 225). The family develops more than the typical relationships involved between parents and children, but operates as a business partnership as well. Because of the overlapping structure between the family and the business, the transition of the family farm can become very complex (Weigel & Weigel, 1990; Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991). Many farms and farm families never experience the transitioning of the farm to a younger generation because of struggles such as stress, turmoil, or change in commitment of the younger generation (Hanson, 1982; Keating & Munro, 1989; Russell, Griffin, Flinchbaugh, Martin & Atilano, 1985; Salamon & Markan, 1984). Jurich and Russell (1987) discovered that rural families experience reluctance when seeking help through family therapy. This may further be applied to mediation processes for farm families.

The issues farm families face may range from financial distress to psychological problems (Jurich & Russell, 1987) and stress compounded by the transitioning of the farm (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991). Financial distress can be brought forth in a variety of ways, such as: the cost associated with land and machinery make it hard for younger generations to become involved in farming independently (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991), or when an economic crisis hits and the value of commodities, such as grains and cattle, drop alongside land values, similar to what was

seen in the 1980s (Jurich & Russell, 1987). The psychological stress stems from the collection of individual stressors of farm, family, and business (Jurich & Russell, 1987). Moreover, the decision making process of the two-generational farm family can become stressful (Weigel & Weigel, 1990). This stress could be reduced through a process such as mediation. Because the USDA offers support through mediation, researchers know the help is available (Bailey, 2004); however, the KAMS must improve its communication with farmers across the state in order to gain recognition (de Chernatony, 2001; Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

The 1980s provide an example of a situation in which farm families faced struggling times. This was an effect of governmental changes that created an unstable economy and unfavorably affected agriculture. The three main factors leading to the economic crisis were: inflation, actions by the Federal Reserve Board, and the federal budget deficit (Harl, 1990). Harl (1990) stated:

For agriculture, the result was (1) a strong dollar that set records against other currencies and that cost U.S. agriculture dearly in terms of export of farm commodities, (2) high interest rates that boosted interest payments for indebted farmers to high levels, (3) falling land values as potential investors were confronted with the reality of 8 to 12 percent real interest rates and the reassessment of land as an alternative investment in the economic environment of the 1980s, and (4) massive defaults on farm loans (p. 17).

Stressors such as those of the 1980s, as well as the average age of the farmer previously discussed, it becomes important to identify the struggles of the families and to relate to their needs (Vanclay F, 2004). One means to address conflict is providing a service, such as therapy for the farm family. According to Jurich and Russell (1987), “Family therapy is a key professional intervention when symptoms develop, following times of high stress, pileup, and low family resources” (p. 365). Finding resources and support in rural areas, however, may be difficult (Molgaard, 1997). An imperative part of providing help is identifying the needs of producers at a local level.

In addition to identifying the services needed for Kansas farmers, producers need to be aware of existing services. Simply offering the needed services will benefit no one if producers are unaware of services (Miller & Berry, 1998). Abrams, Meyers, Irani, and Baker (2010) studied a different service agricultural organization which was struggling with recognition. They concluded that by improving communication with those using the service or those who could use

the services, their brand experienced heightened recognition of what services the organization offered, as well as improved familiarity with the brand itself.

Therefore, branding of the services offered becomes almost as important as the services themselves. The American Marketing Association Dictionary (2013) defines a brand as “a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas.” By creating awareness through branding, an organization can create a unique identity (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). This can be accomplished by implementing branding and marketing strategies (Keller, 2011).

One way to create recognition is through brand salience. According to Romaniuk and Sharp (2004), salience is how recognizable the brand is to the consumer, how it stands out in their mind. Brand salience can also be considered what is at the “top of mind” for the consumer (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004). By appropriately positioning the brand, an organization can more effectively reach its target group (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009).

In addition to branding strategy and brand salience, organizations seeking to help farmers in financial and legal distress should focus on creating a marketing strategy. Irani, Ruth, Telg, and Lundy (2006) supported the theory of developing a two-way symmetrical model of communication related to extension services. This two-way symmetrical model is based on the Excellence in Public Relations Theory developed by Grunig. The two-way symmetrical model develops messages that can motivate or persuade people by using prior research to understand and communicate with them (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Organizations are encouraged to provide information to consumers to help them make informed decisions (Dervin, 1984), whether the consumer requests the information or not (Hance, Chess, & Sandman, 1988).

In order to better serve the need of agricultural producers as they prepare to produce food for a growing population, KAMS needs to identify with agricultural producers in Kansas. In order to be successful, service organizations must relate with their consumer population (Vanclay, 2004). While maintaining an understanding of the connection to the family farm, services, such as assistance in transitioning of the family farm through mediation, may be useful (Jurich & Russell, 1987; Weigel & Weigel, 1990). Furthermore, an organization can heighten its ability to serve farmers throughout the state by spreading awareness of the organization through branding

(Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Miller and Berry (1998) maintain that before an individual becomes interested in a brand, they must be aware it exists.

## **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Agricultural producers possess a unique set of problems when financial and legal issues arise. Inevitably, financial matters often entangle with family matters. These family matters tie back into the business, which is often operated by a two-generational farm family (Bennet, 1982). This two-generational model is filled with challenges in the transitioning of the family farm (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991; Vanclay, 2004; Weigel & Weigel, 1990). For organizations to serve farm families legal and financial needs, farmers must be aware the services are available (Miller & Berry, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to identify the needs of agricultural producers in relation to financial and legal matters at a local level in order to gain knowledge of the perceived agricultural services needed in local communities. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to develop marketing and branding techniques for organizations providing these services.

The following research questions were developed to guide this study:

- **RQ1:** What services, identified by local producers, are needed in local communities across Kansas to assist producers in times of financial and legal distress?
- **RQ2:** What are the perceptions of the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS) among agricultural producers throughout Kansas?
- **RQ3:** What brand attributes, names, and taglines would appeal to producers for an organization addressing their financial and legal distress?
- **RQ4:** How can organizations effectively market financial and legal services to producers?

## **Assumptions**

Assumptions made during this study were related to focus group participants. Half of the participants were to have no previous knowledge or interaction with KAMS, while the other half

was to have general knowledge and understanding of KAMS current operations. Another assumption was that all participants were actively engaged in the agricultural industry and/or their communities.

## **Limitations**

Utilizing focus groups to gather information offers a few limitations. The small number of participants in a focus group in relation to a whole population limits the generalizations that can be made from the study. However, due to the smaller size of a focus group, interactions are often more personable, and therefore allow participants to offer true, detailed perceptions, mimicking social decision making situations. Another limitation is the geographical restrictions of the focus groups. Although they were performed at purposeful points throughout the state of Kansas, the participants were solely Kansas residents. Additionally, when participating in focus groups, individuals may be influenced by what their peers say (Morgan, 1998), but this may cause a clearer representation of what reality presents. Finally, when analyzing the research it is important that the researchers maintain objectivity to ensure the information offered by participants is understood in the correct context.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

- **Agricultural producer/farmer:** “Person that engages in or has engaged in the business of growing or producing agricultural produce for market for delivery or transfer to others owning or holding title to the produce. Agricultural producer includes a landowner, producer, landlord, tenant, sharecropper, or other person who participates in the growing of agricultural produce and receives a share of the produce” (Stoel Rives, 2010)
- **Brand:** A customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme (American Marketing Association, 2013).
- **Brand salience:** Ability of a brand to separate itself from its own environment or history (Guido, 1998).

- **Extension:** One part of the three part mission of land-grant universities designed to reach to the public and provide information related to teaching and research through outreach (Kansas Cooperative Extension Service).
- **KAMS:** Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services; The Kansas organization designed to provide mediation services to agricultural producers throughout Kansas, and funded by the USDA.
- **Marketing:** “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2013)
- **Mediation:** “A voluntary process in which a trained mediator facilitates communication and negotiation between individuals in dispute. The goal of mediation is to reach an agreement that settles the disagreement in a mutually satisfactory manner. Mediations are conducted at a neutral location and in an informal and non-threatening environment.” (Kansas Legal Services, 2009, para. 1).
- **Two generational farm family:** The operation of the family farm by both parents and the adult children. The children receive increasing input with the goal of eventually running the operation (Christensen, 1959; Davis-Brown & Salamon, 1988).
- **Two-way symmetrical communication:** Based on research and science, this model is a part of the Excellence in Public Relations theory and stresses the importance of open communication lines between organizations and consumers (Grunig & Grunig, 1992).
- **USDA:** Department of Agriculture; “We provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management” (United States Department of Agriculture, 2013, para. 1).

## **Summary**

Agricultural producers are part of a unique model of transitioning farm families, seeking to hand the farm from one generation to the next. The transition period presents difficulties because of the overlap between family and business (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991). Adding to this problem can be the financial and legal distress many farm families face. As organizations seek to serve struggling farms and families, they must meet the needs of these families. Organizations seeking to help farmers must identify the needs and how those will be addressed (Vanclay, 2004). Additionally, branding and marketing services to the correct audience is crucial when increasing use of the organizational services (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009).

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

The goal of this study is to understand the needs of agricultural producers in regards to financial and legal concerns, develop the identified services, and give recommendations to effectively market those services. By working with a specific agricultural service organization, this study was able to identify these needed services and determine how to effectively communicate with farmers about resources. In order to gain a better understanding of research that has been previously conducted, a review of the literature was performed. The literature reviewed includes characteristics of the organization, such as current services offered; theory used to guide this study; financial and legal distress of the farmer; preferred communication channels; and marketing and branding of services.

### **Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services**

The Farmers Assistance Counseling and Training Service (FACTS) was established in 1985 by Kansas legislature and was designed to help farmers who were struggling financially (Farmers Assistance Counseling and Training Service). During this time, approximately 80 farmers called each week seeking aid. Of those 80 calls, about 70% were seeking legal and/or financial advice. When FACTS employees viewed it appropriate, they referred the farmers to extension services (Historical Publications). FACTS provided confidential information, counseling, assistance, and referrals for things such as direct legal representation, financial assistance, estate planning, support groups, career retraining and assistance, insurance, and many other related topics (Farmers Assistance Counseling and Training Service). FACTS continued to serve farmers until September 30, 1996 (Program Background and Effectiveness).

Alongside FACTS was the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS), developed in 1988 to assist with agricultural loan mediation. Initially, KAMS was operated as a part of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, but in 1995 it moved under the jurisdiction of Kansas State University and Cooperative Extension Service. Since fiscal year 1996, K-State Research and Extension has “administered the state’s agricultural loan mediation grant,” (Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services, para. 2). Therefore, KAMS operates in conjunction with K-State Research

and Extension. Furthermore, “KAMS is also an ‘approved mediation program’ under Kansas law (K.S.A. 5-501 *et seq.*), having been so certified by the Office of Judicial Administration of the Kansas Supreme Court, Office of Dispute Resolution,” (Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services, para. 3).

**Other mediation services offered.** Throughout the state of Kansas, Kansas Legal Services provides mediation services for many different cases, such as employment discrimination, juvenile dependency, and insurance disputes (Kansas Legal Services, 2009); these services are not specific to the agricultural industry. The Kansas Judicial Branch (2007) offers the following as an outline for becoming a mediator:

Anyone seeking to become an approved mediator must first complete the “core” mediation class. This is a class on the basics of mediation. There are then four advanced categories which can be taken: domestic, civil, parent/adolescent and dependency

Anyone who completes one or more of the advance categories are required to take three co-mediations in each category. You do not have to complete three co-mediations in core unless you are not taking any advanced training (para. 4-5).

Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution offers mediation services in Kansas through Bethel College in their Community Mediation Center. Payment for these services is often based on the participants’ income and is calculated on a sliding scale (Bethel College KIPCOR, 2013). Additionally, Heartland Mediators Association (HMA) offers mediation to Kansas residents, in addition to Missouri, Nebraska, and surrounding states. HMA is a not-for-profit organization (Heartland Mediators Association, 2013).

For the purpose of this study, KAMS is the organization of interest as an example of a program established to help agricultural producers during times of financial and legal distress. To provide an overview and understanding of the current operations of KAMS, the following is information about KAMS structure:

The Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS) is a service available to Kansas residents who would like assistance with resolving all types of agricultural-related issues. Agricultural producers, their lenders, and other people who have received an adverse decision from any of the USDA agencies including Farm Services Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development are encouraged to utilize these services.

KAMS is the USDA Certified State Agricultural Mediation provider for Kansas. KAMS helps Kansans with resolving a wide variety of issues that affect their daily lives. These could include agricultural credit issues, farm foreclosures, USDA Farm program and Farm Loan Program decisions, USDA Rural Housing loan issues, USDA Risk Management issues, and USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service decisions. The KAMS Staff Attorney is available to visit with callers, confidentially and at no cost, regarding any agricultural legal or financial issues, including such topics as answering questions regarding USDA denial letters, clarifying confusing paperwork, understanding appeal options available, agricultural credit situations, property right issues, farm foreclosures, and landlord/tenant disputes.

KAMS specialists provide initial information and guidance at no cost through a toll-free hotline, 1-800-321-3276. A state-wide network of cooperating agencies and programs includes a pool of trained agricultural mediators, K-State Research and Extension financial consultants and Kansas Legal Services (KLS) (Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services, para. 1-3).

Because KAMS is funded through a USDA grant, limitations are set for the services that can be offered. Examples of services not currently being offered by KAMS include a central place to call for agricultural information; strategic planning assistance for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural businesses not experiencing financial distress (e.g., loan denial, loan restructure); assistance with leases, boundary line disputes, or other situations not directly related to the financial feasibility of the operation; assistance for beginning farmers and veterans seeking to return to/enter into farming. According to B. O'Donnell (personal communication, July 8, 2013), by seeking additional income sources, KAMS could expand the services offered to include some of the services previously listed, as well as apply for additional grant funding.

**Kansas State University Farm Analyst Program.** One service KAMS offers is financial assistance. This allows KAMS to work with financial analysts from the K-State Research and Extension (KSRE) Farm Analyst Program, Kansas Legal Service's attorneys, and KAMS's own certified mediators to provide the assistance needed (Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services, 2013). The KSRE Farm Analyst program offers one-on-one consultation. The consultant is an active farmer or rancher trained as a KSRE analyst. The main job of the analyst is to administer the computer software program FinPak (KSU Farm Analyst Program).

FinPak is "a comprehensive financial planning and analysis system designed to help farmers and ranchers understand their financial situation and make informed decisions. It

is not a record keeping system. Instead, FinPack provides tools to effectively use farm records to make business analysis, long-range planning, and cash-flow planning as complete, easy, and meaningful as possible. FinPack is an effective educational tool. It teaches financial concepts through their application on individual farms” (KSU Farm Analyst Program).

## **Excellence in Public Relations Theory**

The excellence in public relations theory was used as the theoretical basis for this study. James Grunig first analyzed public relations behavior in a 1976 study where he used a synchronic, meaning at one time, and diachronic, meaning at two times, communication model set up by Thayer (1968) to describe public relations (Grunig J. E., 1976). Thayer’s idea was that synchronization would allow an organization to function as it always had while the public’s behavior would “synchronize” with the organization. Diachronic communications, then, would be a two-way road in which both the public and the organization benefited (Thayer, 1968). Initially, Grunig measured how 216 organizations had used 16 various public relations materials (example: press releases). Using factor analysis, he classified each of the 16 activities as either synchronic or diachronic (Grunig J. E., 1976). The follow-up study by Schneider [aka L. Grunig] (1985), used Hage and Hall’s (1981) four types of organizations to further classify the 16 public relations activities. After the first two public relations behavior studies - the first study by Grunig (1976) and the second by Schneider [aka L. Grunig] (1985) - Grunig concluded that synchronic and diachronic were not the terms needed for this model.

Because Grunig was dissatisfied with the terms synchronic and diachronic, he applied two new terms for public relations: asymmetrical and symmetrical. This represented balance in communication and effects (Grunig J. E., 1984). Grunig and Hunt (1984) went on to identify the four models of public relations, which included: press agency/publicity; public information; two-way asymmetrical; and two-way symmetrical. These models were based on the historical evolution of public relations. The press agency/publicity model was created in recognition of the the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century press agents who Grunig and Hunt (1984) considered to be founders of true public relations practices. This model revolved around the use of propaganda. Those who practiced press agency/publicity promoted their organization; however the information may have been faulty or provided incomplete information (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Next, the public

information model was a response to journalists publishing negative stories about large corporations and government agencies at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Organizational leaders recognized they needed on-staff journalists to create press handouts, which would display the organization in a positive light (Grunig J. E., 1984). Both the press agency/publicity model and the public information model are based on one-way communication. It was not until World War I that public relations started to become based on behavioral and social sciences (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). This led to the development of the first two-way communication model - two-way asymmetrical - because communication was now being based on science. Scientists were gathering information from the public, as well as returning information to them (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Then came the development of the two-way symmetrical model. Similar to the two-way asymmetrical model, the symmetrical model is based on research and science as it applies to public relations and communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The symmetrical model focuses on understanding rather than persuading the public. The two-way model focuses on research as a solution for how and why the public feels the way they do (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The four models of public relations can be considered both normative and positive theories; however once applied to the organization, most models exemplify a more normative tendency (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). A normative theory provides guidance in order to solve a problem. This is different from the positive theories, which are designed to understand problems (Massy & Weitz, 1977). Grunig and Grunig (1992) stated “the theoretical relationship between the models of public relations and an organization’s environment and structure is more normative than positive” (p. 298).

In an effort to develop a positive theory for public relations communications, Grunig and Grunig (1992) used the power-control theory to understand how an organization applies public relations. The power-control theory suggests an organization acts upon what the most powerful people within the organization choose to do. This is known as the dominant coalition. By using the idea of dominant coalition and applying it to the power-control theory, Grunig and Grunig (1992) said

“Three concepts seem to be important: the culture of the organization, the potential of the public relations department, and the *schema* for public relations in the organization,” (p. 298).

Grunig and Grunig (1992) concluded “Essentially, this research shows that the two-way symmetrical model is the most ethical approach to public relations and that ethical public relations also is the model most effective in meeting organizational goals” (p. 308).

## **Two-Way Symmetrical Model**

In order to better describe the public relations model, Grunig and Grunig (1992) believed it was important to review other theories (dispute resolution, negotiation, mediation, and conflict management) to determine how they apply to public relations. From the review, seven themes were developed to relate to public relations.

The first theme is known as *Interdependence and Relationships*. The organization develops interdependence by building strong, long-term relationships. There is an importance for negotiation when conflict arises (Conrad, 1989; Fisher & Brown, 1988; Gray, 1989; Jandt, 1985; Keltner, 1987; Wilson & Putnam, 1990). Jandt (1985) indicates “the relationship is more important than the conflict” (p. 135).

*Conflict, Struggle, and Shared Mission* is the next theme developed by Grunig and Grunig (1992). This theme recognizes disagreement is likely to happen. However, effectively communicating can help resolve the struggle (Fisher & Brown, 1988). It is important to continue working together through times of conflict to reach a common goal (Gray, 1989).

Being open-minded, willing to understand, and having trust is the motive to the theme *Openness, Trust, and Understanding*. In order to successfully negotiate an idea, trust is needed; however, if the trust created comes from different motives it can lead to dispute (Wilson & Putnam, 1990). Gray (1989) added that when successfully negotiating, people must mean well.

Grunig and Grunig (1992) use the works of Gray (1989) and Wilson and Putnam (1990) to state “these definitions add up to a definition of collaboration as the process of negotiation” (p. 316). Wilson and Putnam (1990) had originally defined negotiation as the “process whereby two or

more parties who hold or believe they hold incompatible goals engage in a give-and-take interaction to reach a mutually accepted solution” (p. 375). These definitions are a part of the theme *Key Concepts: Negotiation, Collaboration, and Mediation*.

*Process and Strategies* are depicted by the involvement of not only the organization but the public to use two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Many strategies tie into the process. Using the work of Hance et al. (1988), Grunig and Grunig (1992) indicated technical details along with understanding the consumer will play a major role in the success of the two-way symmetrical communication model. This theme was described by Grunig and Grunig (1992) as the process of “earning trust and credibility, deciding when to release information, and interacting with the community” (p. 317).

The power, which an organization possesses, can be the cause of the next theme: *Limitations, Obstacles, and Effectiveness* (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Unequal power between organizations or between stakeholders can become threatening to those with less power, especially when there is collaboration (Gray, 1989). Gray believes it is important to evaluate the collaboration in order to measure its effectiveness.

The final theme suggested by Grunig and Grunig (1992) is *Mediated Two-Way Symmetrical Communication*. In 1988 Hance suggested it is important to give people the information they need, regardless of whether they ask for it. Crediting Dervin’s (1984) sense-making approach, Grunig and Grunig (1992) stated “practitioners do research to ask people what information they need to understand a situation or to make a decision – an approach that truly makes symmetrical communication two-way” (p. 320).

The two-way symmetrical communication model, as part of the public relations excellence theory, has been used by researchers working with public organizations. The Kellogg Commission (1999), suggested that land grant universities, engaged in teaching, research, and extension, use two-way communication to improve connections with the community. Furthermore, Baker et al. (2011) suggested land grant institutions utilize two-way symmetrical communication to better understand the needs and interests of the communities they serve. This

may also be applied to service organizations related to agriculture, in which relating to consumers through the development of an understanding of their needs and wants will better serve the community.

## **Branding and Marketing**

“A brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas” (American Marketing Association, 2013). By creating awareness through branding, an organization can create a unique identity (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). This identity becomes recognizable to organizations and to the public, and creates certainty in knowing the product or service that comes with a brand (de Chernatony, 2001).

Brand salience is an important factor in effectively communicating with the public. Salience refers to familiarity of the brand in the public’s mind (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Romaniuk and Sharp (2004) state “A measure of brand salience should capture the extent to which a customer knows and thinks about a brand” (p. 337). Therefore, the more salient the brand is, the more recognizable it is in the consumer’s mind. Because the brand is more recognizable, it also allows the consumer to be certain the brand will be appropriate for a given situation (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004). This can help eliminate uncertainty the consumer may have previously had with other brands (de Chernatony, 2001; Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Tybout & Calkins, 2005).

Branding also plays a key factor for public organizations (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). The livelihood of a public organization is dependent upon the value the public places on that organization’s services. Public value is the ability of a public organization to satisfy the general public, as the organization is providing a product or service that cannot be met by private organizations (Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995). Abrams et al. (2010) found increased brand familiarity and awareness can be created through communicating about the specifics of the brand (i.e., who they are and what they do). In addition to providing public value, public organizations should focus on building relationships, which can be made easier through branding (Whelan, Davies, Walsh, & Bourke, 2010).

Brand equity can be another source for maintaining public value. According to the American Marketing Association, brand equity is “the value of a brand. From a consumer perspective, brand equity is based on consumer attitudes about positive brand attributes and favorable consequences of brand use.” When effective communication is utilized, the salience of brand equity will have a positive effect on consumers (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Raggio & Leone, 2007).

In addition to creating a recognizable brand and public value, public organizations are adding marketing techniques. Because of this, organizations should focus more on public relations (Walsh, 1994). Customer satisfaction and confidence becomes crucial in maintaining public services (Corbin, Kelley, & Schwartz, 2001). Irani et al. (2006) supported the use of the two-way symmetrical model as a part of the marketing strategy for public organizations. The participants in their study all viewed the Web as their primary source of information, and preferred to have interactive website design. “This finding provides support for the potential positive influence of a message strategy focused on a two-way communication approach, in which feedback from stakeholders helps shape the communication message strategy” (Irani et al., 2006, para. 26).

Verma and Burns (1995) found a need to increase marketing in the areas of mass communication, such as radio, newspaper, and television. They suggest although a mass communication message be delivered, it should be part of a grass-roots strategy for the service organization. Their study found it important that community members were easily able to identify a connection between the organization’s mass communication message and the organization’s local representation. Other private sector organizations use similar promotion campaigns, in which the importance of a bond between the mass message and local representation is stressed (Kotler, 1991).

Social media provides a new avenue for marketing of service organizations. In 2012, 67% of Internet users used a social networking site (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). O’Neill, Zumwalt, and Bechman (2011) suggest beginning social media use with Facebook, Twitter, and/or YouTube. This study was conducted by an online service organization, eXtension. Additionally, other

service organization educators are encouraged to use free social media to increase their outreach (Kinsey, 2010).

Another way of creating a unique brand image is the use of an umbrella brand. Umbrella branding is the process of applying one brand across the range of several different product categories. This creates the commonality and uniformity across brands (Keller, 2011). Upon the creation of an umbrella brand, organizations can partner with other brands, which would offer varying services. Keller (2011) explained this as “For example, ConAgra’s Healthy Choice family brand appears on a wide spectrum of food products, including packaged meats, soups, pasta sauces, breads, popcorn, and ice cream” (p. 371). This distinct line of products can be easily identified by consumers as having the same brand salience. Umbrella branding could become beneficial for a service organization, such as KAMS, to create additional new services. These services could operate under the same brand, creating a line of services offered by the organization.

### **Distress of the Farmer**

“Agriculture is farming, and farming is people” (Vanclay F. , 2004, p. 213). Therefore, in order to gain a true understanding of farming and the accompanying practices, an understanding of farmers and the families involved is necessary. To gain an understanding, one must not only look at farming as a technical or vocational practice, but as a socio-cultural practice as well (Vanclay F. , 2004). In order to better understand the ways of farming, the culture of farming should be understood (Kuehne, 2012).

Farming is normally a family practice. Kuehne (2012) describes the farming tradition:

Sometime during my high school years my parents gave me the choice as to whether I would become a farmer or not; but I felt that having spent all of my life on a farm, and being saturated with the farming culture from parents and friends from an early age, as well as being the fifth generation of an unbroken line of farmers, I had little choice but to continue the farming tradition (p. 204).

Often times, because of the family farm tradition, a farm is operated by a two-generational farm family. This two-generational farm family involves having parents actively involved in farming alongside their adult children (Marotz-Baden, Hennon, & Brubaker, 1988; Rosenblatt &

Anderson, 1981; Weigel & Weigel, 1990). Parents typically do this in order to keep the family farm in the family. Parents will gradually give children increasing input in the farm with intentions of eventually transferring the whole farm to the children. This transition involves a mix of family and business, which can cause tremendous stress (Keating & Munro, 1989; Salamon & Markan, 1984).

The transition of the family farm can be difficult for a variety of reasons. There is an overlap of economics, as the family farm is supporting two families (Christensen, 1959). The overlap between the two-generations, as well as the business can also be challenging. This overlap can cause various business disagreements which can be hard to separate from family issues (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991). The following figure from Ballard-Reisch and Weigel (1991, p. 226) illustrates this overlap:

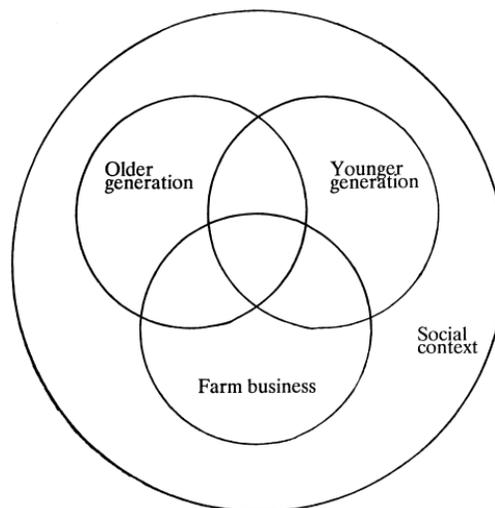


Figure 2.1 – The Nested Nature of the Two-Generation Farm Family

Transitioning the family farm through this two-generational approach is difficult. The older generation may struggle to hand over the decision making for the farm business, while the younger generation seeks to gain respect and responsibility (Rosenblatt & Anderson, 1981). Russell et al. (1985) summarized the findings as: “Professionals such as attorneys, farm management organizations, and estate planners need to be aware that critical psychosocial transitions are occurring within the farm family at the same time that economic transitions are occurring within the farm business” (p. 374). Therefore, recognizing the sensitive nature of the

transfer of the family farm is imperative to the success of professionals working with the farm family (Russell, et al., 1985).

Outside of agriculture, the transition period for family business has also been studied. It has been identified as a difficult process (Handler & Kram, 1988) and may be considered the key issue in managing the family business (Ayers, 1990; Lane 1989). Sharma, Chrisman, and Chau (1997), suggest further research in strategically addressing the productivity and profitability of the family business through a management-based lens.

The stress associated with the transition period is often amplified because of the business and economics involved (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991; Russell, et al., 1985). Additionally, rough economic times, such as the farm crisis of the 1980s, can be an added stress to a farm family. The Farmers Assistance, Counseling, and Training Service (FACTS) program of the 1980s established a toll-free hotline to discuss issues farmers were experiencing and discovered the stress farmers experience:

Prior to starting the hotline, all pertinent research suggested that this economic crisis was a young farmer's problem and the farms involved would be smaller. Also it was suggested that since farmers are such a stoic lot that a significant proportion of all calls would be farm wives wanting to discuss family problems.

To date however, the reverse of all the preconceptions has been much more the case as can be seen by the statistics. Seventy five percent of our callers are male, averaging 49 years of age, who have been farming an average size farm of 1145 acres for 25 years.

Ortega et al. (1994) found psychological symptoms and depression occurred more often due to a direct link with the 1980s farm crisis. In addition to individualized mental health disorders, Ortega et al. (1994) stated "the economic context of community of residence, community social structures, or urban/rural cultural differences also may have effects on mental health beyond their relationships to the perceived economic situation of the household" (p. 614). The researchers therefore indicate that help is needed for individuals and communities alike. Thus, it is important to consider the well-being of individuals, families, and family farms when they are facing stressful times such as transitioning or financial and legal distress. Currently, the USDA funded program used for the purposes of this study does not offer counseling services.

## **Summary**

Working with Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS) to address the needs of agricultural producers in financial and legal distress, as well as how to effectively market of those services, is the center of this study. Through the guidance of the excellence in public relations theory and the two-way symmetrical communication model, KAMS can appropriately develop communication strategies. Furthermore, branding and marketing of public service organizations is important for identifying strategies to reach the public. Upon identifying with the appropriate audience, KAMS should be able to effectively develop new services and market them to agricultural producers.

## Chapter 3 - Methodology

A review of the literature shows the importance of creating a branding strategy for public organizations. Creating a positive lasting image in the public's mind is crucial to success of public organizations (Whelan et al., 2010). Although the importance of informing the public about the services offered is well understood, developing a brand identity and marketing it to agricultural producers is a challenge. The purpose of this study was to identify the needs of agricultural producers in relation to financial and legal matters at a local level in order to gain knowledge of the perceived agricultural services needed in local communities. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to develop marketing and branding techniques for organizations providing these services. The information was gathered through the utilization of focus groups across Kansas.

After reviewing the literature, the following research questions were developed:

- **RQ1:** What services, identified by local producers, are needed in local communities across Kansas to assist producers in times of financial and legal distress?
- **RQ2:** What are the perceptions of the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS)?
- **RQ3:** What brand attributes, names, and taglines would appeal to producers for an organization addressing their financial and legal distress?
- **RQ4:** How can organizations effectively market financial and legal services to producers?

### Design of the Study

This was a qualitative study utilizing focus group methodology to gain a better understanding of the services needed by Kansas agricultural producers and to determine how producers prefer to learn about services offered during times of distress. Because qualitative studies are desired for gathering information in great detail, it was viewed as an appropriate method to measure the research questions of this study. The gathering of this deep information can lead to further

studies focusing on the details gathered. Because the researchers are the instrument used in qualitative studies, they are better able to accommodate the discussions being driven by focus group participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). For the purposes of this study, focus groups were the best avenue to gather in-depth information about a specific population.

Focus groups are useful as they elicit conversations between participants and bring forth detailed and in-depth information. Participants apply their unique experiences and beliefs to the topics at hand which can offer a wide array of avenues for the conversation (Morgan, 1998). According to Morgan (1998), “focus groups draw on three of the fundamental strengths that are shared by all qualitative methods: (1) exploration and discovery, (2) context and depth, and (3) interpretation” (p. 12). Through focus groups, participants can build on each other’s statements, or contrast what the other is saying (Morgan, 1998). Moderators can assist by being flexible. The moderator must be able to recognize the direction of a conversation and whether it will be beneficial to the end goal or not (Krueger, 1998). Focus groups are a method of data collection that allow information to be gathered and understood (Morgan, 1998).

### **Screening Process and Subject Selection**

This study was approved by Kansas State University’s Institutional Review Board (appendix A). A series of six focus groups were conducted at three different locations across the state of Kansas. All sessions were conducted between April 2 and 4, 2013. At each location, two focus groups were held. The locations were selected because of their geographic representation of the state of Kansas. The following are the locations for focus groups:

- Altamont, southeast Kansas
- Dodge City, southwest Kansas
- Beloit, north central Kansas

The hope was to gain a uniform representation from all farmers across Kansas. At each location, one focus group had participants who were knowledgeable or were familiar with the organization, Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS), while the other group comprised of general community members involved in production agriculture unfamiliar with the organization. These groups are referred to as the familiar group and the unfamiliar group.

Individuals in the unfamiliar groups were asked to participate in the focus groups by someone familiar with the area, generally a local extension agent. The local extension agents were able to identify agricultural producers within their area that were unfamiliar with KAMS, while KAMS employees identified individuals who had previously used their services or were familiar with the organization. Therefore, focus groups were recruited by extension agents in local areas, as well as KAMS employees.

This sampling technique is known as purposive sampling, which is used to select individuals and locations because they have an understanding of the research problem or basis of the study (Creswell, 2007). In this situation, those not having an understanding of the organization being studied were also targeted in order to identify additional needs in the area that were not being met by the existing organization.

Each focus group had between three and eleven participants, although Morgan (1998) suggests having six to eight participants as the optimal size. The following represents each focus group:

- Altamont, unfamiliar group – Conducted April 2, 2013, three participants
- Altamont, familiar group – Conducted April 3, 2013, eleven participants
- Dodge City, unfamiliar group – Conducted April 3, 2013, seven participants
- Dodge City, familiar group – Conducted April 4, 2013, ten participants
- Beloit, unfamiliar group – Conducted April 4, 2013, seven participants
- Beloit, familiar group – Conducted April 4, 2013, six participants

“Some people prefer to conduct mini-groups with 3 to 6 people as they believe the smaller number of participants will provide for greater in depth discussion,” (FAQS [Frequently Asked Questions] about Focus Groups, 2008, para. 12). In the analysis process, the group with only three participants mirrored the findings of other unfamiliar groups, as such the researchers determined it was appropriate to include the smaller group in analysis.

Focus group participants were all adults over the age of 18. Different generations existed, with some participants being retired, while others were early in their careers’.

Focus group demographics are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 – Demographics of Focus Groups

	Location					
	Altamont		Beloit		Dodge City	
Gender	A	B	A	B	A	B
Female	2	2	2	3	1	4
Male	9	1	4	4	9	3
Total	11	3	6	7	10	7

*Note.* Group A represents the familiar groups while group B represents the unfamiliar groups at each location. All participants were caucasian.

### **Philosophical Assumptions and Biases**

The researchers viewed this study through an ontological and methodological lens. The ontological lens allowed the researchers to view reality through the lens of the participants, as reality is subjective. As such, the researchers used quotes and themes in words voiced by participants (Creswell, 2007). The methodological lens allowed the researchers to approach the research with logic and allow the design and context of the study to emerge based on experiences in the field (Creswell, 2007). The researchers were external to the organization and not members of the population of study which allowed for an unbiased approach to the study.

### **Procedure**

The days of April 2-4, 2013, researchers led six focus groups throughout various locations across Kansas. A total of 44 participants from across the state were involved, with groups ranging in size from three to eleven. Because of the variability in group sizes at different locations, 27 out of the 44 participants were familiar with the organization, while 17 out of the 44 were unfamiliar with the organization. Each session lasted approximately one hour and the moderator followed standard focus group procedures and used a moderator’s guide to maintain consistency in questions throughout the groups (Krueger, 1998).

Each focus group began with the participants signing an acknowledgement/participation form. Following that, the formal session began with the introduction of the moderator, along with brief instructions and purpose of the focus group. Each participant was then asked to give a general

self-introduction to encourage comfort within the group. To begin the formal questioning, the group was asked to give their knowledge and experience with KAMS. After their personal definition of KAMS, the moderator gave a formal definition of the organization so every participant was exposed to the same description. The following is the definition projected on a screen and read during each focus group (Appendix B):

*The following is a brief summary of the KAMS program:*

The Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS) is a confidential resource that helps producers with financial and legal questions. A toll-free hotline, 1-800-321-FARM (3276), gives immediate confidential and free access to a professional staff for referrals to various services, including: mediation opportunities, financial counseling and legal assistance. Specifically a KAMS staff attorney is available to visit about ag related concerns.

The program's goal is to help resolve difficult situations using mediation, a voluntary confidential process using a neutral third party to help parties identify concerns and explore options and solutions.

KAMS, in conjunction with the K-State Farm Analyst Program, offers farm financial analysis through use of the FinPak computer software program. Through an agreement with Kansas Legal Services direct legal representation to Kansas farmers and ranchers [is available] on a reduced fee basis depending on the producer's level of income.

Administered by K-State Research and Extension the program is available to Kansas farmers, ranchers and the ag community. All calls to KAMS are free and all information shared is confidential.

Following this was a discussion regarding the needs of the participants and their communities, and what they viewed as necessary and valued. Upon identifying the needs of the participants, a list of proposed services not currently being offered under the USDA grant was posted on a screen. This led to the discussion of the proposed services not currently being offered and how the participants felt about each. The following is the list displayed by the researchers during each focus group (Appendix B):

- Increase overall awareness of available resources and assistance available from unit
- A central place to call for agricultural information
- Pro-active, strategic planning assistance for farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses not experiencing financial distress (e.g., loan denial, loan restructure)
- Family farm transition planning

- Family farm mediations. Including, but not limited to, communication or management issues; dissolution of partnerships; family estate trust problems; division of property among heirs; and, conflict regarding transition of the farm.
- Landlord/tenant disputes
- Assistance with leases, boundary line disputes, or other situations not directly related to the financial feasibility of the operation
- Beginning farmer and veterans seeking to return/enter into farming issues
- Staff attorney available to assist with general agricultural related legal and financial questions
- Trainings for mediators interested in being trained as agricultural mediators
- Conducting additional workshops, trainings or seminars

After identifying the needs of the participants and their communities, discussion about developing a new name and tagline began. Participants were first asked to develop a new name for an umbrella brand, which is important to KAMS as it would open doors to offer new services needed by producers that currently cannot be offered due to the USDA grant which funds KAMS. After the groups developed their own ideas, they were shown a short list of predetermined names. They were then asked to decide if they liked the one the group developed or a predetermined name better. The following is the list of predetermined names projected on a screen:

- *Strategic Farm Planning Center*
- *Kansas Ag Resource Center*
- *Ag Connections for Kansas*

Similar to the development of names for an umbrella brand, the groups were asked to develop a tagline. After discussion and creating their own tagline, groups were shown a list of predetermined taglines, and asked to decide if they liked the tagline they created or a predetermined one better. The following is the list of the predetermined taglines projected on the screen:

- *“Managing for the future”*
- *“Connecting people with resources”*

Each focus group identified their top choice for a name and a tagline. These choices were added to the predetermined lists so every group had exposure to what the population deemed a top choice.

The final topic discussed was marketing ideas and what avenues participants viewed as best suited to receive information about available services. After identifying the marketing needs, the focus groups concluded with any final thoughts and remaining comments.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The focus group sessions were recorded via field notes and audio recorders. Throughout the discussion, an assistant moderator took detailed notes. After all the focus groups were analyzed, audio recordings were transcribed by an outside party. In the meantime, a small presentation of the findings based on field notes and the researchers' experience was conducted with a small group of people with knowledge of KAMS. Following transcription, transcripts were imported into Weft QDA software to be analyzed. Glaser's (1965) constant comparative method was used during analysis. This method involves identifying the category to which each incident belongs, comparing each incident to those prior; identifying similarities between incidents and categorizing them; setting boundaries for the categorizes; and writing theory. Writing theory involves describing how the participants responded using an overarching theme, and then using research objectives to organize those.

Rigor in qualitative research can be described by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorenson, 2010). To ensure credibility the researchers used verbatim transcripts, allowing for direct quotes to be used to maintain accuracy, maintaining the fullness of information, easing the participants by using ice breaker questions, and allowing the participants to validate one another's statements (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & and Robson, 2001; Flick, 2006; Krueger, 1998; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). The information gathered through this research could be representative of similar populations of agricultural producers throughout other states. Maintaining transferability is addressed by giving detailed descriptions of the participants' responses (Creswell, 2007). Dependability was accomplished by having one researcher analyze transcripts while an alternate researcher, who was present for all focus groups,

reviewed the analysis for validity and confirmability. Finally, confirmability occurred through the use of transcripts rather than just field notes. Also, the findings were presented to a small group of people involved with the organization before final analysis (Ary et al., 2010).

### **Summary of Methodology**

Researchers used six focus groups across the state of Kansas with a split group of participants. Half of the focus group participants were familiar with KAMS while the other half was unfamiliar with KAMS. Each session was recorded using field notes and audio. Data analysis looked for common themes and similarities between focus groups by using Glaser's (1965) constant comparative method.

## Chapter 4 - Results

The findings from the six focus groups designed to identify the needs of agricultural producers related to financial and legal matters will be presented in this chapter.

The following research questions were developed to guide this study:

- **RQ1:** What services, identified by local producers, are needed in local communities across Kansas to assist producers in times of financial and legal distress?
- **RQ2:** What are the perceptions of the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS)?
- **RQ3:** What brand attributes, names, and taglines would appeal to producers for an organization addressing their financial and legal distress?
- **RQ4:** How can organizations effectively market financial and legal services to producers?

Results from this study are presented in the order of the research questions. The results are based on the participants' discussion. The focus groups were conducted at three different locations. Locations were selected based on their geographic representation of the state of Kansas. These locations included:

- Altamont, southeast Kansas
- Dodge City, southwest Kansas
- Beloit, north central Kansas

### **RQ1: Services Needed in Local Communities**

To gather needed information for RQ1, “what services are needed in local communities across Kansas to assist producers with financial and legal distress,” focus group participants were asked what services they saw as necessary in their local communities. The major themes were family farm transition planning, marketing, and promotion of KAMS and the services currently offered. Participants also valued the financial assistance currently offered by KAMS and felt the program should continue. The following paragraphs offer a detailed account of these themes.

**Family farm transition planning.** All six focus groups mentioned the need for family farm transition planning (or estate planning). Four groups brought this subject up prior to the moderator mentioning it. Although all groups touched on the topic, the groups familiar with KAMS mentioned this more confidently as a problem. Participants in several of the groups stated there was a need for legal assistance in relation to family farm transition planning. Another concern expressed in relation to family farm transition planning was the average age of the farmer. Participants also mentioned compiling a directory of who in their local areas could help with family farm transition planning. The following are quotes from various focus group participants.

A participant from Altamont's unfamiliar group expressed a lack of legal assistance in the area for farmers, saying "I don't even know if a farmer wants to work on a transition plan; I don't know that we have very much legal assistance in our area that I could go to."

Other participants in Beloit's unfamiliar group expressed a need for legal assistance:

"I think that is really a huge one, succession planning, getting advice."

"Do they assist with like estates and trusts or wills and things like that for the farms?"

Participants from the familiar group at Beloit stated how mediation could play a role in family farm transition planning:

We also kind of touched on earlier, the young farmer deal. There's probably a need there, right now it's in a lot of organizations. And it's a popular deal, and if we don't do something here in rural America to get younger people out there, median age is just sky rocketing.

A participant went on to express how this need would affect him/her directly.

But from my stand point, family transition planning is a big issue because there gives up being a lot of animosity and a lot of lost farms because of that. And I really think it's in a way it's mediation, it's just you know, family mediation that, you know an outside source that can sit down, a family and say, now here is something logical.

A participant from the Beloit unfamiliar group commented on family farm transition planning in relation to the average age of the farmer:

Well, there is also the issue of transfer from one generation to the next generation and all the aspects that are involved in terms of farm ownership, farm management. That's certainly a big issue, I think in our area because our farmers are always getting older. And it's very, you know, just to look in our township, there are no young farmers. You know, so it's an issue for most of our farmers.

Conversation from participants from Dodge City's unfamiliar group tied in both the legal matters of family farm transition planning and the average age of the farmer, stating:

I don't know if they are applicable or not, but there is a, I think we have questions thrown out, of estate planning and also with insurance.

I will add on to his, estate planning with some of the generation is getting older as far as passing down the family farms and the tax implications and that kind of thing, we will [need] counseling or legal advice on that subject.

A participant from Dodge City's familiar group summarized the need for their community:

You know the thing I think is on the forefront with us right now and their future concern is passing down kind of the reforms. And there [are] a lot of big name people who have written about that, but in our experience with the people who farm for us, we were seeing more of that recurring situation. And a lot of it can be resolved by proper counseling with attorneys; and but there will be problems because they are already benefiting, have been problems on the farm transitioning with the, especially with the spouse not understanding that situation and sometimes, a child not understanding. You know the classic example is a dad standing on a hill looking over the farms and saying, "son, someday this will be your ground." The son is thinking of being in a couple of months and dad is thinking of about 15-20 years, and there is that misunderstanding that takes place and these will be resolved sometimes. And a lot of times, when they come to you, mostly the resolution of that problem is become a very serious problem. And you have to be careful in dealing with it, but more kids, sons and daughters are coming back from college and wanting to farm. And sometimes you go into a private enterprise for a few years and then come back to farm. And often talk about how much money it takes to do that, a lot of people don't really understand that. And I think it's really important that they have that resource where they can, if it does come to mediation, that they can go to.

**Marketing and promotion of KAMS.** Another major theme taken from the focus groups was the marketing and promotion of KAMS. Groups mentioned the need to spread the word about what services the organization already provides. These data are being presented under "services needed" because that is when groups conveyed this need. Participants saw the need for marketing and promotion of the existing services being as important as the services themselves. Groups brought up the need for KAMS to become more visible in the community prior to being

asked about what marketing techniques KAMS should use. Participants felt there was disconnect between information about KAMS and their communities.

A participant from Beloit's familiar group expressed the need for their community to know about KAMS:

I think that is a good point. How do people know that the mediation service is available, you know I know how they get it from us if we tell them that information that is out in the public I'm sure it lingers getting that information out but for just over this, do they know that mediation is even available? I'm not sure if advertising or getting the word out there will little bit more, I don't know but.

A male participant from Altamont's familiar group expressed the need for more visibility of the organization:

My question would be, where do they advertise? I mean where do they, I don't know if I see it. Maybe I missed it. Are they in like the *Kansas Farmer*? Or do they have a website? I think sometimes maybe you know, I was asked, "Well how can we better our services?" . . . And in today's world, it seems like everything is so instantaneous. We got Internet and all that. I really don't have their website. If there's a website, but for me, I would be more to know and look forward to other farmers, and I guess I could be somebody that could say "Hey, if you're having an issue here, look up this website." It is almost like it needs to be published, you know maybe go out in the local papers once in a while or something that could be, like the Internet but there's a lot of people that aren't messing with the Internet you know. I don't know if a lot of people are aware that this exists. So my thing on that would be how can KAMS advertise more so that the general agricultural community notice that service is there.

A participant from Dodge City's unfamiliar group expressed similar concerns:

I think the biggest one is just promoting, it's being, and I am the farm, you know I am a board member of the Farm Bureau and I said this about K-State Research and Extension, I have said it about Farm Bureau, we just don't get our message out, on what we offer. But yeah, you have got the other companies that have advertising dollars that maybe not so upfront and honest with, what they are handling, doing the advertising, trying to pull people in, you know that may not be in the services. But I think we need to promote it.

**Financial assistance.** Focus group participants believed financial assistance was a necessary service in their communities and KAMS should continue offering it. Participants valued different aspects of financial assistance, such as filling out financial paperwork, working with the Farm Analyst Program, and preparing for an economic financial crisis. When asked what participants

felt would be a major issue in the future or an on-going issue, a participant stated “Well I can say financial issues.”

A participant from Altamont’s unfamiliar group stated the need for help with financial paperwork:

And another thing that I see and I think it would be very beneficial is someone to help you to fill out financial paperwork, if for a loan or initially getting things, often get things put together and take to the accountant instead of just taking in a box of receipts, but I know a lot of people do because they all bring the same box to me. And, so I think there is a definite need.

A participant from Beloit’s familiar group said “Well, the Farm Analyst Program is and has been for a long time under-funded. And that is really a program that I wish that they can find more funding for.”

A participant from Dodge City’s familiar group expressed a concern for planning for an economic crisis:

[Name removed] makes a really good point and I am thinking about that, the people we dealt with in the 80s are going to be completely, they were completely different than the farmer we are going to deal with when the next one happens. Because I saw people who couldn't even fill out a cash form or a financial statement.

. . . But what are we going to see, the farms are going to be the next time, when they see a big crunch. We are not going to see people, with the kind of debt that we had in the 80s you know, the big problem is the high interest rate, because that doesn't exist now. We were just talking about, but what is going to be the situation, a big crisis.

But then again and it will, and I think KAMS has to anticipate what that's going to be, there are people with greater mind than mine, they can kind of anticipate some of that. That's what you have to be looking here, where is it going to be and how bad is it going to be and who are the people that will be involved in it.

## **RQ2: Perceptions of KAMS**

To address RQ2, “what are the perceptions of the existing KAMS organization,” participants were asked what they knew about KAMS and about any previous experiences they had with KAMS. Focus group participants familiar with KAMS had positive things to say about the organization, the services offered, and current employees. Focus group participants unfamiliar

with KAMS saw the services offered as necessary and saw potential usefulness for their communities.

**Familiar groups.** All three focus groups familiar with KAMS valued the organization, the services offered, and the organization's employees. Participants viewed KAMS as a necessary and useful organization.

A participant from Altamont's familiar group stated, "I have been involved with the mediation service since the 80s and I wouldn't be here today as a farmer if it wasn't for their service."

He/she also said "And they helped me save that farm from being taken. And so, emotionally I have a lot of good, positive feelings about what the mediation service has done."

Another participant from Altamont's familiar group expressed the relief mediation can bring:

We could not get anything settled, and finally the result to bring in a mediator, and I don't understand why they can bring in mediators and bring in other people and settle it in five minutes when you couldn't settle with an adjustor. . .

A participant from Dodge City's familiar group appreciated the confidentiality of the organization. He/she expressed this as:

I worked for them when I was college and then I, as an extension agent, I refer several different issues to them, as people have come into my office and usually give them the -- you know referring them on, give some of the confidentiality in the resources they need to resolve those problems without making it everybody's business in the county, particularly if it's a smaller county.

A participant from Dodge City's familiar group expressed his/her concern with the lack of visibility of the organization.

And KAMS is just, it needs to be and I don't know how you do this, but they need to be more familiar in the agricultural community. And a lot of times, I have mentioned to people that, they don't know anything about it. They remember the old farm FACTS and from the 80s, but they are not as familiar with the KAMS. So it needs to be out in the community and make this service available to them.

**Unfamiliar groups.** Focus group participants unfamiliar with KAMS had generally positive things to say about the services KAMS offered. They saw a need in local communities for the current services KAMS offered, as well as additional services.

A participant from Altamont's unfamiliar group thought connecting people with services was important:

I haven't had the opportunity to use it, but I'd really like to, thought of having someone to go to and maybe help out someone as far as getting in touch with AgrAbility or other resources out there that I don't know about, they're great resource to direct people to.

A participant from Beloit's unfamiliar group thought the connection of producers to legal counsel was important:

. . . I think could be a good tool for producers cause sometimes it's just a matter of clarification that they need or education on the matter. So if this is a tool free way of receiving the legal counsel for free and not have to take it a step further. If that's all it takes it's further education on this issue of it maybe so.

Another participant from Beloit's unfamiliar group also saw value in the services KAMS offers saying “. . . I would never want to take away services that we can give producers, the problem becomes funding and being able to do those functions.”

### **RQ3: Branding of KAMS**

To gather information for RQ3, what brand attributes, names, and taglines would appeal to producers for an organization addressing their financial and legal distresses, focus group participants were asked, unaided, about an appropriate name for a new umbrella brand. Those unaided suggestions were not consistent across groups and thus are not reported here. Next, participants were asked about their feelings toward pre-selected umbrella brand names and if they preferred a previously developed name over a name their focus group developed.

**Brand names.** The predetermined umbrella brand names developed by KAMS staff were:

- *Strategic Farm Planning Center*
- *Kansas Ag Resource Center*
- *Ag Connections for Kansas*

The most common suggestion for an umbrella brand name was a form of “Kansas Ag Resource Center.” “Kansas Ag Resource Center,” or a name closely related, was preferred by three groups. Other groups had varying suggestions for brand names, such as “Kansas Ag Planning,” “Farm Planning Center,” and “Ag Help.”

A participant from Altamont’s familiar group said, “I like the ag resources.”

A participant from Beloit’s unfamiliar group said “I like the second one myself,” referring to the second bullet point of “Kansas Ag Resource Center.”

A participant from Dodge City’s familiar group said:

I am thinking, it’s working, but the closest one that would be, you know their ag resource center, but the resources could be looked at several different ways. Resources could be money, resources could be, you have employees that or people that you could, they could call to have come in and work for them, you know human resources, financial resources, lots of different things that they are probably going to provide that people would be calling and asking for.

**Taglines for the brand.** Similar to the development of names for an umbrella brand, the groups were asked to develop a tagline. After discussion and creating their own tagline, groups were shown a list of predetermined taglines, and asked to decide if they liked the tagline they created or a predetermined one better. The following are the predetermined taglines:

- *“Managing for the future”*
- *“Connecting people with resources”*

Suggestions for the tagline were split between the groups. The groups familiar with KAMS tended to like the term “supporting” to create a tagline such as “Supporting Kansas Ag,” while the unfamiliar groups preferred the term “connecting.” All three unfamiliar groups agreed on “Connecting people with ag resources.” The unfamiliar group from Dodge City added more, developing the tagline “Connecting people with ag resources for a strong future.”

A participant from Beloit preferred “connecting” by stating “So if you say connecting people with ag resources for a strong future.”

A participant from Dodge City's familiar group expressed preference for the term "supporting" by saying "The supporting Kansas caught my eye, but you need to personalize that, you need to do it, but supporting people in Kansas agriculture."

**Brand attributes.** Participants from different locations had strong feelings about certain attributes of the new brand. For instance, some participants felt the term "mediation" was negative and meant someone was going to be in trouble. Participants were mixed on brand attributes, but the feelings expressed by participants about specific brand attributes are included here to offer insight into producers' feelings.

**Mediation.** A participant from Dodge City's familiar group said the "pride" many farmers experience about their profession, and how that correlates with his personal negative feelings toward the term mediation:

I think so often, I mean mediation, the term mediation, it always has, it seems like it has a negative connotation, I guess a negative meaning or so when people bring it up. And so often I mean you hit it on the transition phases and all. And so often people try to work through that on their own. And they don't realize that, I mean mediation could really be a benefit to them . . . not have a negative impact on things.

But, I mean, especially you get into the ag community, they are proud people. So they try to work through things on their own as much as they can. Sometimes you can do that, sometimes you can't. So, I think this is kind of improving public awareness of what mediation is and that it's not necessarily a bad thing. But sometimes you just have a little help is outside of the viewpoint, so.

A participant from Altamont's familiar group expressed fear of the term "mediation" as well saying "That mediation thing scared me to death. I thought I was in trouble and we were. . ."

Another participant from Altamont's familiar group expressed the confusion with the term "mediation" saying "Mediation . . . I don't think that people understand what that is."

**Assistance.** A participant from Dodge City's unfamiliar group expressed concerns about using the term "assistance," saying:

Really connecting, but instead of assistance and it just happened, when you said that, people were kind of proud, they don't want to ask for help. So if you say "Connecting People with Ag Resources for a Strong Future".

A participant from Dodge City's familiar group stated ". . . But somehow in there, I think we need to have like assistance in there."

**Support.** A few groups liked including the word "support" in either the umbrella brand name or in the tagline.

A participant from Altamont's familiar group summarized "You know we really like the word support."

A participant from Beloit's familiar group stated "Okay maybe we like the word support."

**Free.** Participants in a few groups also expressed concerns with KAMS and the new organization using or promoting the word "free." Some participants felt that because a service was being offered free of charge, it would lack the quality of a service.

A participant from Altamont's familiar group expressed concerns about the term "free," saying ". . . And as far as free, sometimes free isn't as good as you have to pay for something. . ."

A participant from Dodge City's unfamiliar group expressed concerns about KAMS offering free services:

I would rather deal with an attorney and pay him a fair fee for doing good work for me as not or accountant, where my need is. But I mean you are going to expand this, doing this for free, then you are in a position of competing with private enterprise with government tax dollars. And I have a problem with that.

**Other key words.** The following are some examples of the feelings expressed by group participants about various words.

Conversation from Altamont's familiar group implies the word "resource" would be good to include in branding with the following conversation:

“The resource center gives you the impression that they have multiple things that are available. It’s just my thought.”

“And maybe that’s a positive?” asks the researcher.

“Very positive.”

A participant from Dodge City’s familiar group did not want to include the word “resources” but did like the idea of including the word “future,” saying:

I like the first one is all right I guess. I mean the resources is so vague to me. I think there is so little focus on being proactive in the future planning. And whoever, what dad recommends is going to be seen biased to the son and whatever the son recommends, is going to seem biased to the dad and we talked succession planning. The dad thinks you want him to die and you know and it’s, you know the kid just wants to know what’s the plan and so, I don’t know, future always just sounds more, like you are on top of it, is that, but not now.

#### **RQ4: Marketing Services**

To address RQ4, “how can organizations effectively market services offered to producers related to financial and legal distress,” participants were asked about the most appropriate place to promote the services KAMS, and the new umbrella organization, offer. Five of six focus groups brought up the use of social media marketing, the need for an organizational representative as a face for the community, as well as collaboration with extension. Radio served as a secondary marketing tool being suggested by four out of six focus groups. Furthermore, the groups familiar with KAMS suggested collaboration with Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Other marketing opportunities for KAMS discussed by three of the six focus groups were newspapers advertisement, newsletter/pamphlets/informational handouts, magazine advertisement, website and search engine optimization, and advertisements at local agricultural-based stores, such as cooperatives or feed stores.

**Social media marketing.** Social media marketing was suggested by five of the six focus groups. Even though some participants were not active users of social media outlets, they thought there would be potential for KAMS, and the new umbrella organization, to reach a younger generation of users, through Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Conversation from the Altamont unfamiliar group discussed social media use:

“For the next generation that’s the time that your tractors run auto steer when you’re getting caught up on Facebook,”

“Facebook, Twitter, and I guess media okay.”

“Social media.”

A participant from the group familiar with KAMS at Altamont stated, “But I mean Facebook is one avenue that we use as far as just communicating back and forth.”

A participant from Beloit’s familiar group expressed the concept of building an online presence to build visibility of the organization:

. . . You know with different types of methods like you said in the social media, the YouTube videos, the Peterson brothers and their things like that, that are entertaining as well as informational and this probably will be something you know that is what they are trying to accomplish. And so to be able to promote something like that would probably be something that for the day will have a little bit more variety I guess in that sense not huge. But in the circles that we are wanting to connect with they do have, I think some ability to get a message across from different fields.

A participant from the familiar group at Dodge City expressed the change in technology as:

Well I think even with the population, the changing population and technology websites and Facebook's pages even are, I mean are going to be huge. I have more producers that send me texts and emails and stuff like that, than I do get phone calls.

**Organizational representative.** When discussing marketing needs, five of the six focus groups expressed a need for an organizational representative that is active throughout the state. This conclusion was drawn by the researchers through participants’ discussion of the need for meetings, conferences, workshops, and trade shows, all of which require a representative.

A participant from Altamont’s familiar group referred to KAMS being present at conferences:

You see we’ve been doing this “Women in Ag” conference every year and it’s been our fifth year and the women are really, the women, they’re more likely to ask for help. They’re more likely to go seek out help. If they come to that, they really like the programs that we’ve had, to have the lease, that type of thing and then the women and farm conference, this was my first year and I was blown away by the information offered there. At the beginning it was women and they were really receptive to all programs that

were offered in the information. So, I don't know if it could come out to the field a little further.

A participant from Dodge City's familiar group expressed the need for a representative in other areas of the state:

. . . I think they need a liaison person that is going to be able to be a spokesperson, somebody who is involved with the ag communication, somebody that can be, you know able to travel around and visit with the different connections that the service provides, as well as brainstorming ideas just like you are doing today to improve the service.

The participant went on to describe the needed characteristics of a statewide representative:

And I don't think as an individual person and say, well to do that right now and just like I said, they are probably strapped down in Manhattan, where they love to be able to spread the word with their services, but are they able to do it financially or there is nothing set up. But I think you got to understand that the generation gap, somebody that's familiar with old school versus new school and able to connect to I think that would be very beneficial.

Another participant from Dodge City's familiar group agreed:

I think getting them out here and you know have the force come out and do two meetings in western Kansas helped some because people can put a face with the name, but again what we ask them to do was outside the realm of what his USDA grant, says he can do. And I think you know he did it as a favor and because he knows that's the need and something that we service we need to be able to provide.

**Extension collaboration.** In addition to social media marketing and having an organizational representative, focus group participants suggested collaborating with extension. In some instances, researchers had to clarify the existing relationship between Kansas State Research and Extension and KAMS, as some participants were confused or had questions.

A participant from Beloit's unfamiliar group said "This maybe a silly statement but do they do anything with extension?"

A participant from the Altamont unfamiliar group suggested "Using their extension offices and contacting USDA offices."

A participant from Altamont's familiar group stated:

So I think you're right [name removed], if we used the extension service which is statewide to maybe expand that public knowledge base so that people just made aware of the fact that if you think you may have an issue, here's a resource for you and here's how they can help.

A participant from Dodge City's unfamiliar group said "Have an extension program."

**Radio.** Four of the six focus groups mentioned radio as a source of advertising and marketing of KAMS and the new umbrella organization. Participants felt radio could be an economically feasible option for advertisements by using public service announcements or other options.

Focus group participants in Beloit's familiar group had the following conversation:

"Like radio stations if it's a..."

"Public service."

"Public service there is no charge. So that'll be a free type of deal or something."

Other participants thought paid radio or television might offer a solution. A participant from Dodge City's unfamiliar group said "Most print media and I don't know about electronic media, but I think radios in terms of that, infomercials like to share."

A participant from Dodge City's familiar group said:

I would encourage TV and radio; I mean those are biggest things, especially I mean I guess that was something that just popped into my mind as I mean a commercial about it. You never hear about them on TV or sometimes you do on the radio, not a whole but like I mean most of it, it's all through referral and I mean if you are wanting to be more active and really push the services, those are large media markets that you can hit people with.

**Other marketing opportunities.** Other marketing opportunities for KAMS discussed by three of the six focus groups were newspaper advertisements, newsletter/pamphlets/informational handouts, magazine advertisements, website and search engine optimization, and advertising at local agriculture-based businesses, such as cooperatives or feed stores.

A participant from Altamont's familiar group expressed the need for search engine optimization as "You know it would be something they could pick up on a, like a Google search you know, something like that."

Another participant from Altamont's familiar group suggested brochures:

But if you could put, get a name, put together a brochure that could be at your, at the bank, at the farm services agency, at various insurance agencies, at farm bureau agencies, you know, you can get that out and your cost for the brochure would not be that much.

Some statements from Beloit's unfamiliar group include: "Community websites," and "Definitely the coffee shop for farmers."

A female participant from Beloit's unfamiliar group commented "So maybe linking the website with the local websites or the extension group's or Chamber of Commerce or something like that."

A participant from Dodge City's unfamiliar group suggested print opportunities "But then there are a lot of folks at magazines and stuff that print press releases for free. We have like journals, you could submit it."

**Farm Service Agency collaboration.** The three groups familiar with KAMS all expressed the organization should collaborate with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) as a part of their marketing strategy.

A participant from Beloit's familiar group said:

As far as getting the word out I, I don't know if this would be a conflict of interest or not, but Farm Service Agencies trying to get every, every producer, every land owner a monthly newsletter and when the farmers hear they're getting up, signed up for that monthly newsletter I think the sign up right now is only about 30%, but were trying to get to 100% or 90% here in the next year. But that may be a conflict of interest or FSA to do that with Ag Help or whatever it's going to be so that's something.

A participant from Altamont's familiar group said "And your Farm Service Agents."

## Summary

The data obtained from the six focus groups conducted across the state of Kansas were analyzed to answer RQ1-4. Researchers discovered participants saw a need for assistance with family farm transitioning, and the need for KAMS to become more visible to Kansas communities through marketing and promotion of their services. Participants placed value on the existing financial assistance program. Participants felt financial assistance should continue to be offered.

Participant's perceptions of KAMS were overwhelmingly positive. Those having previous experience with KAMS appreciated and valued the current organization, while those having no previous experience saw potential usefulness for the organization. Most participants felt the biggest improvement the organization could make would be to improve their marketing and branding efforts.

The most common name suggestion for an umbrella brand was "Kansas Ag Resource Center," while the tagline preferences varied between "Supporting Kansas Agriculture" and "Connecting People with Ag Resources." Brand attributes included fear of the term "mediation" and concern for the term "assistance." Groups generally appreciated the use of "support." Also, several groups were worried about organizations advertising "free" services, as they felt the services may lack quality.

Furthermore, marketing suggestions from the majority of the focus groups included social media use, having a statewide organizational representative, and collaboration with extension. Several groups also valued radio advertisements as a marketing technique. Other marketing opportunities brought up throughout the focus groups were newspaper advertisements, newsletter/pamphlets/informational handouts, magazine advertisements, website and search engine optimization, and advertising at local agricultural-based businesses, such as cooperatives or feed stores. The familiar groups also suggested collaboration with the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

## Chapter 5 - Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify the needs of agricultural producers in relation to financial and legal matters at a local level in order to gain knowledge of the perceived agricultural services needed in local communities. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to develop marketing and branding techniques for organizations providing these services. This study sought to address four research questions, which guided the focus groups. The research questions included: 1) what services, identified by local producers, are needed in communities across Kansas to assist producers in times of financial and legal distress; 2) what are the perceptions of the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS); 3) what brand attributes, names, and taglines would appeal to producers for an organization addressing their financial and legal distress; 4) how can organizations effectively market financial and legal services to producers?

Focus groups were conducted April 2-4, 2013. Two focus groups were conducted at each geographic location: one familiar group and one group of people unfamiliar with KAMS. The locations included: Altamont, Beloit, and Dodge City. Locations were chosen to represent the geographic regions of Kansas.

### Conclusions

**Services perceived as needed in Kansas communities.** Focus group participants saw a need for assistance with family farm transition planning, the need for KAMS to be more visible to Kansas' communities through marketing and promotions of services, and the need for financial assistance. Family farm transition planning was discussed in every focus group as a service needed. Participants recognized the increasing age of the farmer and the need to transition to younger generations. In addition to the age of the farmer, participants understood transitioning the family farm was stressful for farmers, and would likely require legal paperwork. They felt defining a clear goal for the transition period would be important to keeping the family farm alive.

Focus group participants also felt marketing and promotion of KAMS was a valuable service. Participants in groups of general community members and groups familiar with KAMS expressed they were unaware of where KAMS currently advertised the services offered. Participants valued the current services being offered but felt it was equally as important to promote those services so farmers knew where to turn for help.

Finally, focus group participants felt financial assistance was a necessary service and that KAMS and/or the new organization should continue offering it. Participants valued different aspects of financial assistance, such as assistance completing financial paperwork, using the Farm Analyst Program, and preparing for an economic financial crisis. Several participants felt that while current markets were good for farmers, things can, and likely will, change. They wanted farmers to have somewhere to turn if markets fall, and they felt KAMS could provide those services.

**Perceptions of KAMS.** Focus group participants had positive things to say about the organization, even if they had never had direct interaction. Participants familiar with KAMS had positive things to say about the organization, the services offered, and current employees. Some participants even expressed the emotional attachment they have to the KAMS organization because of past experiences. Focus group participants unfamiliar with KAMS saw the services offered as necessary and saw potential usefulness for their communities.

**Brand attributes, names, and taglines.** Participants from different locations had strong feelings about attributes of the new brand. For instance, some participants felt the term “mediation” was negative and meant someone was going to be in trouble. In addition to being fearful of the term “mediation,” participants expressed that by using the term “assistance,” an organization risks hurting the pride of the farmer. Participants liked using the term “support.” Finally, participants were cautious of using a “free” service, as they feared it may lack quality. They preferred to pay for a quality service than to have a “free” service that lacked quality.

Participants did not develop strong feelings for the name or tagline of the new umbrella organizations. The most common name suggestion was Kansas Ag Resource Center, although participants had no strong feeling one way or another for this name. Even more confusion came

with developing a tagline. Groups familiar with KAMS preferred “Supporting Kansas Ag” while general community members preferred “Connecting people with ag resources.” No definite conclusion was reached in regards to a tagline.

**Marketing financial and legal services.** Major themes in the area of marketing financial and legal services were social media, having an organizational representative, and collaboration with extension. Radio was a secondary source for marketing. Many participants felt social media was an avenue to use to connect with younger generations. Several participants stated they did not personally use social media, but they felt others did and recommended KAMS use it. Participants also felt that having a representative in communities to connect with farmers would be beneficial. They felt having someone attend farm shows, local meetings, and conferences would help spread the word about the services offered. Similar to having an organizational representative, participants felt a good avenue for marketing would be to continue collaborating with extension because it is a statewide organization. Also, participants felt extension agents could provide referrals to KAMS and the new organization. Finally, four of the six focus groups mentioned using radio services to reach a broad audience. Participants suggested KAMS could get free radio time by utilizing a public service announcement while still reaching a large audience.

## **Discussion**

**Family farm transition planning.** Focus group participants felt assistance with transitioning of the family farm was a necessary service in their communities. Participants recognized the overlap of generations and the stressful impact it can have on families. They understood goals of the farm differed between generations. Because the different generations do not have one uniform goal for the farm, family members develop personal goals for what *they* want the farm to accomplish. This leads to confusion and stress between generations. This is similar to the findings of Keating and Munro (1989), who found often there is no clear goal when older generations begin the exiting phase. Participants acknowledged that during the transition period, several different families could be involved. This may include a son, his wife, and their children. Differences of opinion about how to run the family business possibly exist. Similarly, Ballard-Reisch and Weigel (1991) found that in the two-generation farm family there is an overlap

between the older generation, the younger generation, and the farm business. In order to successfully transfer the family farm, it is important to understand the ultimate goal.

In addition to recognizing differences within the farm and the goals each family has for the farm, participants felt mediation could prove beneficial. They expressed the value of having a neutral party to discuss the transition process with in order to reduce future stresses related to differing goals. Although Jurich and Russell (1987) referred to therapy rather than mediation, they showed a decrease in stress levels of rural families who used therapy. This portrays the importance of working together when transitioning the family farm. Each farmer may possess a different goal, but having one clearly defined goal is vital.

**Marketing and promotions.** Focus groups illustrated a major need for brand awareness related to KAMS. Groups mentioned the need to communicate about services the organization already provides. Participants saw viewed marketing and promotion of existing services to be as important as the services themselves. Participants previously using KAMS services felt the services were of high quality and useful; however, they felt families were under-utilizing these services because they were unaware of their existence. While working to promote KAMS and the new organization, uniformity among the branding efforts will be important. This will help create brand recognition and salience. This relates to work done by others. Franzen and Moriarty (2009) indicate an organization can create a unique identity by heightening awareness about the organization through branding efforts. This identity becomes recognizable to the organization and to the public and creates certainty in knowing the product or service that comes with a brand (de Chernatony, 2001).

**Financial assistance.** Focus group participants believed financial assistance was a necessary service in their communities and KAMS should continue offering it. Participants valued different aspects of financial assistance, such as assistance filling out financial paperwork, using the Farm Analyst Program, and preparing for an economic financial crisis.

Participants in this study expressed confusion and frustration associated with financial paperwork. They believed by continuing to offer financial assistance through various programs,

KAMS could help members of their communities. This research is on target with what past researchers have found. The stress associated with the transition period is often amplified because of the business and economics involved (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1991; Russell, et al., 1985). Additionally, difficult economic times, such as the farm crisis of the 1980s, can be an added stress to a farm family.

**Perceptions of KAMS.** Focus group participants familiar with KAMS expressed positive emotions about the organization, the services offered, and current employees. Groups unfamiliar with KAMS saw the services offered as necessary and saw potential usefulness for their communities. It is possible participants familiar with the KAMS organization have a strong emotional attachment to the organization and its employees because they helped them in a time of crisis. The participants familiar with the organization were often on a first-name basis with the employees of KAMS. Participants expressed that they cared for and trusted the KAMS employees and felt the employees reciprocated these feelings. This finding is similar to that of Corbin, Kelly, and Schwartz (2001), who found customer satisfaction and confidence becomes crucial in maintaining public services.

Researchers found KAMS had high public value and was well perceived throughout Kansas communities; therefore, these positive emotions and experiences will help the new umbrella brand with its branding efforts. It was important to gather consumer perceptions of the organization to assist with branding efforts. Branding plays a key factor for public organizations (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). The livelihood of a public organization is dependent upon the value the public places on that organization's services. Public value is the ability of a public organization to satisfy the general public, as the organization is providing a product or service that cannot be met by private organizations (Hoggett, 2006; Moore, 1995).

**Branding of KAMS.** This study supports asking consumers about their feelings toward a brand name and a brand tagline as a strong strategy for ensuring satisfaction. Furthermore, having a mixed group of consumer knowledge, those having previous knowledge of KAMS and a unfamiliar group, helps to cover a wide range to make sure KAMS and the new organization are delivering an appealing message. Participant discussion unveiled that each consumer can

perceive one word in a different manner. For example, one participant may suggest the name “Kansas Farm Assistance;” however, a different participant may say they find the word “assistance” offensive because it implies a person needs help. Gathering information regarding consumer perceptions was beneficial to the organization and allows the organization to convey a positive contextual message to its consumers.

Consumer perceptions are an important component in understanding branding and should be taken into account when developing a new umbrella brand. An important piece of branding efforts is creating brand salience for the organization, as brand salience is imperative in effectively communicating with the public. Ultimately, KAMS and the new organization are seeking to achieve brand salience. This research aligns with research on brand salience (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004), which shows the more salient the brand is, the more recognizable it is in the consumer’s mind. Participants expressed a need for farmers to know where to turn prior to being in financial distress. This indicates participants thought brand salience would be advantageous in knowing if a brand were a good fit prior to using the brand. This aligns with the work of Romaniuk and Sharp (2004), who said because the brand is more recognizable, consumers can be certain the brand will be appropriate for a given situation, and is also key to marketing and promotion. Through the creation of a consistent brand that is salient with producers, KAMS and the new organization can effectively reach their consumers before they are in need of financial and legal services.

**Marketing services.** Social media marketing, the need for an organizational representative as a face for the community, as well as collaboration with extension were all discussed as necessary marketing tools. Radio served as a secondary marketing tool being suggested by four out of six focus groups. Furthermore, the groups familiar with KAMS suggested collaboration with Farm Service Agency (FSA).

These findings are consistent with work of other researchers. In a study conducted by an online service organization, eXtension, O’Neill et al. (2011) suggested when beginning the use of social media that individuals should start with Facebook, Twitter, and/or YouTube. Additionally, other service organization educators are encouraged to use free social media to increase their outreach

(Kinsey, 2010). Based on the KAMS research, organizations may find it particularly beneficial to use social media to reach their consumers on an emotional level. Participants expressed an emotional connection with KAMS, which could be aided further by social media. Engaging in social media can provide a sense of connection between organizations and consumers (Mazali, 2011) and therefore may create a deeper sense of trust for the consumer.

Radio served as a secondary marketing tool, as not all focus groups discussed using it. Radio may have some value in reaching audiences not using social media channels. Researchers recommend radio as a part of the overall brand strategy when marketing financial and legal services to producers. This is supported by Verma and Burns (1995), who found a need to increase marketing in the areas of mass communication, such as radio, newspaper, and television. They suggest although a mass communication message be delivered, it should be part of grass-roots strategy for the service organization. Their study found it important that community members were easily able to identify a connection between the organization's mass communication message and the organization's local representation. Other private sector organizations use similar promotion campaigns, in which the importance of a bond between the mass message and local representation is stressed (Kotler, 1991).

Other marketing opportunities for KAMS discussed by three of the six focus groups were newspapers advertisement, newsletter/pamphlets/informational handouts, magazine advertisement, website and search engine optimization, and advertisements at local agricultural-based stores, such as cooperatives or feed stores.

## **Recommendations**

This research developed recommendations of theoretical, practical, and professional use. Moreover, this research supports the excellence in public relations theory. Furthermore, this study has practical recommendations for service organizations and provides suggestions for agricultural communications professionals.

**Theoretical.** The theoretical framework used to guide this study was the excellence in public relations model developed by James Grunig. This theory has evolved over time to develop four

models of public relations, which included: press agency/publicity; public information; two-way asymmetrical; and two-way symmetrical (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). For the purposes of this research, the two-way symmetrical model was used, which focuses on understanding the public rather than persuading the public. Furthermore, the two-way model focuses on research as a solution for how and why the public feels the way they do (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), which was the foundation of this study.

This study supported the two-way symmetrical model of the excellence in public relations theory. Researchers found that in focusing on what the public values, the organization can effectively reach their customers. By conducting focus groups, researchers were able to gain in-depth information about what services the public values. This study confirms the two-way symmetrical communication model is desired by rural agricultural participants. Participants continually expressed their appreciation for being asked to participate and encouraged the organization to continue seeking opportunities for two-way communication. This was seen through participants' request for social media and contact with the organization on a regular basis. The two-way model should be adapted by other organizations seeking to connect with rural audiences.

**Practical.** The results of this study produced practical implications as they can be applied to other agricultural service organizations seeking to reach rural communities. It is important for organizations to provide a clear image about what the organization is and what services the organization offers. Results support the need for organizations to develop and utilize an overall brand strategy. For the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services, community members who were familiar with the organization and community members unfamiliar with the organization both saw value in the services offered by the organization but felt KAMS should work to increase brand salience. KAMS and other similar organizations should consider marketing and promotion strategies that represent a two-way communication model, including social media, an organizational representative, and collaboration and advertising with extension. Radio should serve as a secondary marketing tool. Other marketing tools to consider are newspaper advertisements, newsletter/pamphlets/informational handouts, magazine advertisement, website and search engine optimization, and advertisements at local agricultural-based stores, such as

cooperatives or feed stores. Organizations working with rural communities should seek to address the needs of local communities in their marketing and branding strategies.

Other service organizations providing similar services to KAMS, or reaching a similar population, should understand what the public values. For these focus groups, the participants valued family farm transition planning assistance, as well as financial assistance. The participants felt these were complex topics, and it would be beneficial to work with a neutral party on these topics. Participants also expressed the need for assistance in legal matters relating to family farm transition planning and financial assistance. Branding and marketing techniques should be utilized to create brand awareness for organizations seeking to help producers during a time of crisis. Without the brand being salient prior to the producer needing help, they will be unsure where to turn for help.

**Professional.** Recommendations for agricultural communication professionals have also resulted from this study. Industry professionals should note the negative connotations of some terms identified by participants. Participants felt the term “mediation” meant someone was in trouble, while asking for “assistance” would hurt the pride of the farmer. Furthermore, participants were concerned that offering “free” services meant they would not receive quality service. It was mentioned that people would rather pay a fee for quality services than to have a service offered free of charge that was not quality. Finally, there seemed to be confusion of participants about the term “resources.” One participant felt the term was broad and meant the organization offered several different things, while another felt the term was vague.

A word with positive connotations for participants was “support.” Professionals should consider using this term in brand names or in taglines.

In summary, agricultural communications professionals should:

- Limit the use of the terms “mediation” and “assistance”
- Use caution when marketing free services
- Understand there may be confusion in the term “resources”
- Use the word support

## **Recommendation for Future Research**

Future research should focus on the specific brand attributes consumers desire and/or are fearful of when targeting services to rural communities. It would be of interest for future research to evaluate the term “free” versus “USDA-funded” to see if consumers were faithful in USDA funded services. Related to marketing “USDA-funded” services, it would be of interest to evaluate the credibility consumers place on services provided by Kansas State Research and Extension and the USDA.

Other recommendations for future research related to brand attributes and marketing should evaluate marketing media as payment based on a sliding scale, or paying in full for mediation. Do consumers place more value on the mediation they receive when they pay for it? It would also be of interest for future studies to test the social media and in-person marketing strategies requested by the participants in these focus groups. Additionally, it would be of interest to assess the gender of individuals seeking out mediation services.

Collecting data from focus group participants via electronic focus groups rather than in-person focus groups would be of interest. Gathering electronic information may allow the participants to disclose information they would previously not mention with peers around.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The researchers recognize the limitations of this study. This study was limited in size to a small group of Kansas producers. All producers in this study were white, eliminating input from minorities. Furthermore, median age of focus group participants was varied. The limited number of participants in this study means thoughts and opinions are limited to the individuals selected for this study. However, information gathered from this research may be transferable to organizations similar to KAMS seeking to expand their services or to further develop branding efforts.

## Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify the needs of agricultural producers in relation to financial and legal matters in order to gain knowledge of the perceived needs of services in local communities.

This study sought to address four research questions, which guided the focus groups. The research questions included: 1) what services, identified by local producers, are needed in local communities across Kansas to assist producers in times of financial and legal distress; 2) what are the perceptions of the Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS); 3) what brand attributes, names, and taglines would appeal to producers for an organization addressing their financial and legal distress; 4) how can organizations effectively market financial and legal services to producers?

Six focus groups were performed to gather information pertaining to the purpose and research questions. Focus groups were conducted April 2-4, 2013. Two focus groups were conducted at each geographic location: one unfamiliar group and one group of people familiar with KAMS. The locations included: Altamont, Beloit, and Dodge City.

Results of this study concluded that rural Kansas community members see a need for service organizations similar to KAMS. Participants value assistance with family farm transition planning as well as financial assistance. Groups believed marketing and promotions of the services offered is just as critical as having the services themselves. Participants felt these services should be marketed through two-way communication channels, such as: social media, having an organizational representative, and collaboration with extension.

The information gathered from this study also provides theoretical, practical, and professional recommendations. This research supports Grunig's excellence in public relations theory two-way symmetrical model with a group of rural agricultural participants. The data also provides direction for practice, such as the importance of organizations providing a clear image about who they are and what services they offer, and professional implications, such as using caution when using the term "free" to market services. Organizations should consider strategically identifying

with their audience through branding of their organization and marketing of their services. Organizations should develop and implement an overall brand strategy.

## References

- Abrams, K., Meyers, C., Irani, T., & Baker, L. (2010). Branding the land grant university: Stakeholders' awareness and perceptions of the tripartite mission. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 48 (6), Available at <http://www.joe.org/joe/2010december/a9.php>
- Ag Manager Info (n.d.). *KSU Farm Analyst Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.agmanager.info/programs/analyst.asp>
- American Marketing Association (2013). Resource Library. Retrieved from Available at: [http://www.marketingpower.com/\\_layouts/dictionary.aspx?dletter=b](http://www.marketingpower.com/_layouts/dictionary.aspx?dletter=b)
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., & Sorenson, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education (8th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Ayers, G. (1990). Rough family justice: Equity in family business succession planning. *Family Business Review*, 3(1), 3-22.
- Bailey, C. A. (2004). *USDA agricultural mediation program*. Retrieved from <http://www.mediate.com/articles/baileyc1.cfm>
- Baker, L. M., Abrams, K., Irani, T., & Meyers, C. (2011). Managing media relations: Determining the reputation of a land grant institution from perspective of media professionals. *Journal of Applied Communications*, 95(2), 60-73.
- Ballard-Reisch, D. S., & Weigel, D. J. (1991). An interaction-based model of the social exchange in the two-generation farm family. *Family Relations*, 40(2), 225-231.
- Bennet, J. W. (1982). *Of time and the enterprise*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bethel College KIPCOR (n.d.). *Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution*. Retrieved from <http://kipcor.org/Community-Mediation-Center/index.php>
- Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M., & and Robson, K. (2001). *Focus groups in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Burton, R. J. (2004 ). Seeing through the 'good farmer's' eyes: Towards developing an understanding of the social symbolic value of 'productivist' behaviour. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 44(2), 195-215.
- Christensen, H. (1959). *Handbook of marriage and the family*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Conrad, C. (1989). *Strategic organizational communication: Cultures, situations, and adaptation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Corbin, C. L., Kelley, S. W., & Schwartz, R. W. (2001). Concepts in service marketing for healthcare professionals. *American Journal of Surgery*, 181(1), 1-7.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Davis-Brown, K., & Salamon, S. (1988). Farm families in crisis: An application of stress theory to farm family research. In R. Marotz-Baden, C. Hennon, & T. Brubaker, *Families in rural America: Stress, adaptation and revitalization* (pp. 47-55). St. Paul: National Council on Family Relations.
- de Chernatony, L. (2001). *From brand vision to brand evaluation: Strategically building and sustaining brands*. Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Dervin, B. (1984). A theoretic perspective and research approach for generating research helpful to communication practice. *Public Relations Research and Education*, 1(1), 30-45.
- Duggan, M., & Brenner, J. (2013). *The demographics of social media users - 2012*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.
- Erdem, T., & Swait, J. (1998). Brand equity as a signaling phenomenon. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 7(2), 131-157.
- Farmers assistance counseling and training service. (n.d.). [Historical pamphlet from current KAMS employees].
- Fisher, R., & Brown, S. (1988). *Getting together: Building a relationship that gets to yes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Franzen, G., & Moriarty, S. (2009). *The Science of Art and Branding*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Glaser, B. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social Problems*, 7(3), 436-445.
- Gray, B. (1989). *Collaborating: Finding common ground for multiparty problems*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Group Plus (2008). FAQs about Focus Groups. Retrieved from <http://www.groupsplus.com/pages/faq.htm#5>
- Grunig, J. E. (1976). Organizations and public relations: Testing a communication theory. *Journalism Monographs*, 46.

- Grunig, J. E. (1984). Organizations, environments, and models of public relations. *Public Relations Research & Education*, 1(4), 6-29.
- Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. In J. E. Grunig, *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 285-325). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, INC.
- Guido, G. (1998). The dichotic theory of salience: A framework for assessing attention and memory. *European Advances in Consumer Research*, 3(3), 114-119.
- Hadler, W., Kram, K. (1988). Succession in family firms: The problem of resistance. *Family Business Review*, 1(4), 361-381.
- Hage, J., & Hull, F. (1981). A typology of environmental niches based on knowledge technology and scale: The implications for innovation and productivity. *University of Maryland: Centre for the study of innovation, entrepreneurship, and organisation strategy, working paper nr, 1*.
- Hance, B. J., Chess, C., & Sandman, P. M. (1988). *Improving dialogue with communities: A risk communication manual for government*. New Brunswick, NJ: Environmental Communication Research Program, Rutgers University.
- Hanson, R. (1982). *Family members on friendly terms while farming together*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, Department of Agricultural Economics.
- Harl, N. E. (1990). *The farm debt crisis of the 1980s*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.
- Heartland Mediators Association*. Retrieved from <http://www.heartlandmediators.org/>
- Hoggett, P. (2006). Conflict, ambivalence, and the contested purpose of public organizations. *Human Relations*, 175-194.
- Irani, T., Ruth, A., Telg, R. W., & Lundy, L. K. (2006). The ability to relate: Assessing the influence of a relationship marketing strategy and message stimuli on consumer perceptions of extension. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 44(6). Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2006december/a7p.shtml>
- Jandt, F. E. (1985). *Win-win negotiating: Turning conflict in agreement*. New York: Wiley.
- Jurich, A. P., & Russell, C. S. (1987). Family therapy with rural families in a time of farm crisis. *Family Relations*, 36(4), 364-367.

- Kansas Judicial Branch (2007). Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved from <http://www.kscourts.org/programs/alternative-dispute-resolution/FAQ.asp>
- Kansas Legal Services (2009). Mediation Services. Retrieved from <http://kansaslegalservices.org/Mediation>
- Kansas State Research and Extension (n.d.). Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services. Retrieved from <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/kams/p.aspx?tabid=19>
- Kansas State Research and Extension (n.d.). Kansas Cooperative Extension Service. Retrieved from: <http://ksre.ksu.edu/p.aspx?tabid=17>
- Kansas State Research and Extension (n.d.). Historical Publications. Retrieved from [http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/historicpublications/Pubs/Ext\\_Hist\\_Ch\\_5\\_p167-216.pdf](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/historicpublications/Pubs/Ext_Hist_Ch_5_p167-216.pdf)
- Keating, N. C., & Munro, B. (1989). Transferring the family farm: Process and Implications. *Family Relations*, 38(2), 215-228.
- Keller, K. L. (2011). *Strategic brand management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity*. Pearson Education India.
- Keller, K. L., & Lehmann, D. R. (2006). Brands and branding: Research findings and future priorities. *Marketing Science*, 25(6), 740-759.
- Kellog Commission (1999). Returning to our roots: The engaged institution. Retrieved from <http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=183>
- Keltner, J. W. (1987). *Mediation: Toward a civilized system of dispute resolution*. Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.
- Kinsey, J. (2010). Five social media tools for the extension toolbox. *Journal of Extension* [Online], 48(5). Available at: [http://www.joe.org/joe/2010october/pdf/JOE\\_v48\\_5tt7.pdf](http://www.joe.org/joe/2010october/pdf/JOE_v48_5tt7.pdf)
- Kotler, P. (1991). *Marketing management: Analysis, planning, implementation, and control*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Krueger, R. A. (1998). Moderating Focus Groups. In D. L. Morgan, & R. A. Krueger, *The Focus Group Kit* (pp. 1-115). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, Inc.
- Kuehne, G. (2012). My decision to sell the family farm. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 30(2), 203-213.
- Lane, S. (1989). An organizational development/team-building approach to consultation with family businesses. *Family Business Review*, 2(1), 5-16.
- LeCompte, M., & Goetz, J. (1982). Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research. *Review of Educational Research*, 52(1), 31-60.

- Marotz-Baden, R., Hennon, C. B., & Brubaker, T. H. (1988). *Families in rural America: Stress, adaptation, and revitalization*. St. Paul: National Council of Family Relations.
- Massy, W., & Weitz, B. A. (1977). A normative theory of market segmentation. In F. M. Nicosia, & Y. Wind, *Behavioral models for market analysis: Foundations for marketing action* (pp. 121-144). Hinsdale, IL: Dryden.
- Mazali, T. (2011). Social media as a new public sphere. *Leonardo*, 44(3), 290-291.
- Miller, S., & Berry, L. (1998). Brand salience versus brand image: two theories of advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 38(5), 77-82.
- Molgaard, V. K. (1997). The extension service as key mechanism for research and services delivery for prevention of mental health disorders in rural areas. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 25(4), 515-544.
- Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating public value: Strategic management in government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Morgan, D. L. (1998). The Focus Group Guidebook. In D. L. Morgan, & R. A. Krueger, *The Focus Group Kit* (pp. 1-103). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- O'Neill, B., Zumwalt, A., & Bechman, J. (2011). Social media use of cooperative extension family economic educators: online survey results and implications. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 49(6). Available at <http://www.joe.org/joe/2011december/rb2.php>
- Ortega, S. T., Johnson, D. R., Beeson, P. G., & Craft, B. J. (1994). The farm crisis and mental health: A longitudinal study of the 1980s. *Rural Sociology*, 59(4), 598-619.
- Program Background and Effectiveness*. (n.d.). [Historical pamphlet from current KAMS employees].
- Raggio, R. D., & Leone, R. P. (2007). The theoretical separation of brand equity and brand value: Managerial implications for strategic planning. *the Journal of Brand Management*, 14(5), 380-395.
- Romaniuk, J., & Sharp, B. (2004). Conceptualizing and measuring brand salience. *Marketing Theory*, 4(4), 327-342.
- Rosenblatt, P., & Anderson, R. (1981). Interaction in farm families: Tension and Stress. In R. T. Coward, & W. Smith, *The family in rural society* (pp. 147-166). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Rosenblatt, P.C., Nevaldine, A., Titus, S.L., (1978). Farm families: Relation of significant attributes of farming to family interaction. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 8(1), 89-99.

- Russell, C. S., Griffin, C. L., Flinchbaugh, C. S., Martin, M. J., & Atilano, R. B. (1985). Coping strategies associated with intergenerational transfer of the family farm. *Rural Sociology*, 50(3), 361-376.
- Salamon, S., & Markan, K. K. (1984). Incorporation and the farm family. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 46(1), 167-178.
- Schneider [aka Grunig], L. A. (1985). The role of public relations in four organizational types. *Journalism Quarterly*, 62(3), 567-576.
- Sharma, P., Chrisman, J., & Chua, J. (1997). Strategic management of the family business: Past research and future challenges. *Family Business Review*, 10(1), 1-36.
- Sureshwann, S., & McAleer, P. (2008). Family farm forum: A discussion of issues and programs affecting family farms. *Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service*. Retrieved from [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/ag\\_systems/pdfs/farm\\_transitions\\_update.pdf](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/ag_systems/pdfs/farm_transitions_update.pdf)
- Stole Rives (2010). Grape sale liens.[On-Line]. Available at <http://www.stoel.com/webfiles/OregonWine/liens.pdf>
- Thayer, L. (1968). *Communication and communication systems*. Homewood, IL: Irwin.
- Tybout, A., & Calkins, T. (. (2005). *Kellogg on branding: The marketing faculty of The Kellogg School of Management*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- United States Department of Agriculture (2012). 2007 Census of Agriculture. Retrieved from [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov)
- United States Department of Agriculture (2013). Mission Statement. Retrieved from [http://usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=MISSION\\_STATEMENT](http://usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=MISSION_STATEMENT)
- United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (n.d.). About FSA. Retrieved from <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=about&subject=landing&topic=ham>
- Vanclay, F. (2004). Social principles for agriculture extension to assist in the promotion of natural resource management. *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture*, 44(3), 213-222.
- Verma, S., & Burns, A. (1995). Marketing extension in Louisiana: Image and opportunity. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 33(6). Available at <http://www.joe.org/joe/1995december/rb1.php>
- Walker, J.L., Walker, L.J.S., & MacLennan, P.M. (1986). An informal look at farm stress. *Psychological Reports*, 59(2), 427-430. doi: 10.2466/pr0.1986.59.2.427
- Walsh, K. (1994). Marketing and public sector management. *European Journal of Marketing*, 28(3), 63-71.

- Weigel, D. J., & Weigel, R. R. (1990). Family satisfaction in two-generation farm families: The role of stress and resources. *Family Relations*, 39(4), 449-455.
- Whelan, S., Davies, G., Walsh, M., & Bourke, R. (2010). Public sector corporate branding and customer orientation. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(11), 1164-1171.
- Wilson, S. R., & Putnam, L. L. (1990). Interaction goals in negotiation. In J. A. Anderson, *Communication yearbook 13* (pp. 374-406). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

**Appendix A - Institutional Review Board Application  
for Approval Form**

<b>FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:</b> IRB Protocol # _____	Application Received: _____
Routed: _____	Training Complete: _____

## Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB)

Application for Approval Form

Last revised on January 2011

### ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:

- **Title of Project:** (if applicable, use the exact title listed in the grant/contract application)  
Kansas Agricultural Media Services Branding and Marketing Study
  
- **Type of Application:**  
 New/Renewal       Revision (to a pending new application)  
 Modification (to an existing # \_\_\_\_\_ approved application)
  
- **Principal Investigator:** (must be a KSU faculty member)

Name:	<span style="background-color: #cccccc;">Lauri Baker</span>	Degree/Title:	<span style="background-color: #cccccc;">Assistant Professor</span>
Department:	<span style="background-color: #cccccc;">Communications</span>	Campus Phone:	<span style="background-color: #cccccc;">785-532-1140</span>
Campus Address:	<span style="background-color: #cccccc;">307 Umberger Hall</span>	Fax #:	<span style="background-color: #cccccc;">785-532-5633</span>
E-mail	<span style="background-color: #cccccc;">LMBaker@k-state.edu</span>		
  
- **Contact Name/Email/Phone for Questions/Problems with Form:** contact the principle investigator
  
- **Does this project involve any collaborators not part of the faculty/staff at KSU?** (projects with non-KSU collaborators may require additional coordination and approvals):  
 No  
 Yes
  
- **Project Classification** (Is this project part of one of the following?):  
 Thesis  
 Dissertation  
 Faculty Research  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
Note: Class Projects should use the short form application for class projects.
  
- **Please attach a copy of the Consent Form:**  
 Copy attached  
 Consent form not used
  
- **Funding Source:**  Internal     External (identify source and attach a copy of the sponsor's grant application or contract as submitted to the funding agency)  
 Copy attached       Not applicable
  
- **Based upon criteria found in 45 CFR 46 – and the overview of projects that may qualify for exemption explained at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html>, I believe that my project using human subjects should be determined by the IRB to be exempt from IRB review:**  
 No  
 Yes (If yes, please complete application including Section XII. C. 'Exempt Projects'; remember that only the IRB has the authority to determine that a project is exempt from IRB review)

If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or <a href="mailto:comply@ksu.edu">comply@ksu.edu</a>
--

Last revised on January 2011

## Human Subjects Research Protocol Application Form

The KSU IRB is required by law to ensure that all research involving human subjects is adequately reviewed for specific information and is approved prior to inception of any proposed activity. Consequently, it is important that you answer all questions accurately. If you need help or have questions about how to complete this application, please call the Research Compliance Office at 532-3224, or e-mail us at [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu).

Please provide the requested information in the shaded text boxes. The shaded text boxes are designed to accommodate responses within the body of the application. As you type your answers, the text boxes will expand as needed. After completion, print the form and send the original and one photocopy to the Institutional Review Board, Room 203, Fairchild Hall.

Principal Investigator:	Lauri Baker
Project Title:	K-State Research & Extension/ Kansas Ag Mediation Services Name Change
Date:	3/28/13

### MODIFICATION

Is this a modification of an approved protocol?  Yes  No If yes, please comply with the following:

If you are requesting a modification or a change to an IRB approved protocol, please provide a concise description of all of the changes that you are proposing in the following block. Additionally, please highlight or bold the proposed changes in the body of the protocol where appropriate, so that it is clearly discernable to the IRB reviewers what and where the proposed changes are. This will greatly help the committee and facilitate the review.

### NON-TECHNICAL SYNOPSIS (brief narrative description of proposal easily understood by nonscientists):

A series of focus groups will be conducted with current Kansas Ag Mediation Services (KAMS) users and those who refer people to KAMS. The purpose of these focus groups is to determine how to best market the service to users and determine new potential services, and a potential name change. Questions will be asked about participants current use and ideas for how to market. Additionally, participants will be asked questions about potential name changes and branding efforts.

### I. BACKGROUND (concise narrative review of the literature and basis for the study):

"A brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas" (American Marketing Association Dictionary, 2013). The cultural identity of an organization is an important component of building a brand. This identity encompasses the entire image of the organization and often includes visual elements like logos and images, which extend to the mission and vision of the organization creating an overall image of the organization (American Marketing Association Dictionary, 2013; Corley, Cochran, & Comstock, 2000). A well-established brand may have trouble shifting its brand identity, like changing its name or mission, if customers are already attached to the brand's heritage (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). An organization's identity is tied to its organizational culture, which begins at the heart of the organization with the internal organizational culture (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 2004).

### II. PROJECT/STUDY DESCRIPTION (please provide a concise narrative description of the proposed activity in terms that will allow the IRB or other interested parties to clearly understand what it is that you propose to do that involves human subjects. This description must be in enough detail so that IRB members can make an informed decision about proposal).

This study will utilize focus groups in order to gain the opinions of the end users for a rebranding effort/ umbrella brand name for KAMS. Six focus groups will be conducted around the state of Kansas utilizing Extension contacts and Extension offices in the state. Each focus group will consist of 8-10 adults, who will be asked about their opinions and perceptions of KAMS and the future of KAMS. The sessions will be audio recorded and transcribed. Participants will be assigned a number during the analysis phase and no information about their identity will be revealed during the publication process.

### III. OBJECTIVE (briefly state the objective of the research – what you hope to learn from the study):

Last revised on January 2011

2

**This study is designed to determine the branding needs for Kansas Ag Mediation Services.**

**IV. DESIGN AND PROCEDURES** (succinctly outline formal plan for study):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A. Location of study:   | Dodge City, Beloit, and Altamont, Kansas in KSRE CCounty Extension Offices.   |
| B. Variables to be studied:   | Attitudes and perceptions of participants   |
| C. Data collection methods: (surveys, instruments, etc – PLEASE ATTACH)   | moderator's guide/questioning route   |
| D. List any factors that might lead to a subject dropping out or withdrawing from a study. These might include, but are not limited to emotional or physical stress, pain, inconvenience, etc.: | No factors are anticipated that would lead to a subject dropping out.   |
| E. List all biological samples taken: (if any)  | none  |
| F. Debriefing procedures for participants:  | The participants will again be told the purpose of the study and how their comments will be used to improve the Kansas Ag Mediation Services. |

**V. RESEARCH SUBJECTS:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| A. Source:   | People who are already KAMS users , those familiar with KAMS, or who may refer people to KAMS. |
| B. Number:   | max of 60 people (6 focus groups with a max of 10 per group)                                   |
| C. Characteristics: (list any unique qualifiers desirable for research subject participation)  | People who are familiar with KAMS and the public services offered.                             |
| D. Recruitment procedures: (Explain how do you plan to recruit your subjects? Attach any fliers, posters, etc. used in recruitment. If you plan to use any inducements, ie. cash, gifts, prizes, etc., please list them here.) | Participants will be recruited by local KSRE Extension Offices.                                |

**VI. RISK – PROTECTION – BENEFITS:** The answers for the three questions below are central to human subjects research. You must demonstrate a reasonable balance between anticipated risks to research participants, protection strategies, and anticipated benefits to participants or others.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| A. <b>Risks for Subjects:</b> (Identify any reasonably foreseeable physical, psychological, or social risks for participants. State that there are “no known risks” if appropriate.) | There are no anticipated risks to participants.                |
| B. <b>Minimizing Risk:</b> (Describe specific measures used to minimize or protect subjects from anticipated risks.)   | All participants information provided will remain confidential |
| C. <b>Benefits:</b> (Describe any reasonably expected benefits for research participants, a class of participants, or to society as a whole.)  | There are no anticipated benefits.                             |

In your opinion, does the research involve **more than minimal risk** to subjects? (“Minimal risk” means that “the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.”)

Yes       No

**VII. CONFIDENTIALITY:** Confidentiality is the formal treatment of information that an individual has disclosed to you in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others without permission in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure. Consequently, it is your responsibility to protect information that you gather from human research subjects in a way that is consistent with your agreement with the volunteer and with their expectations. If possible, it is best if research subjects' identity and linkage to information or data remains unknown.

Explain how you are going to protect confidentiality of research subjects and/or data or records. Include plans for maintaining records after completion.

**Participant's identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. They will be assigned a code number. Their name will not be connected to any comments. The list connecting their name to this number will be kept in a locked file. The discussion will be audio recorded. An assistant moderator will take detailed notes. Only the researcher and research assistants will have access to the tapes, notes, and transcripts. They will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list and the tapes will be destroyed. Participants' names will not be used in any report. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.**

**VIII. INFORMED CONSENT:** Informed consent is a critical component of human subjects research – it is your responsibility to make sure that any potential subject knows exactly what the project that you are planning is about, and what his/her potential role is. (There may be projects where some forms of “deception” of the subject is necessary for the execution of the study, but it must be carefully justified to and approved by the IRB). A schematic for determining when a waiver or alteration of informed consent may be considered by the IRB is found at

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/consentckls.html>

Even if your proposed activity does qualify for a waiver of informed consent, you must still provide potential participants with basic information that informs them of their rights as subjects, i.e. explanation that the project is research and the purpose of the research, length of study, study procedures, debriefing issues to include anticipated benefits, study and administrative contact information, confidentiality strategy, and the fact that participation is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time without penalty, etc. Even if your potential subjects are completely anonymous, you are obliged to provide them (and the IRB) with basic information about your project. See informed consent example on the URCO website. It is a federal requirement to maintain informed consent forms for 3 years after the study completion.

**Yes    No    Answer the following questions about the informed consent procedures.**

- |                                     |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | A. Are you using a written informed consent form? If “yes,” include a copy with this application. If “no” see b.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | B. In accordance with guidance in 45 CFR 46, I am requesting a waiver or alteration of informed consent elements (See Section VII above). If “yes,” provide a basis and/or justification for your request.   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | C. Are you using the online Consent Form Template provided by the URCO? If “no,” does your Informed Consent document has all the minimum required elements of informed consent found in the Consent Form Template? (Please explain)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | D. Are your research subjects anonymous? If they are anonymous, you will not have access to any information that will allow you to determine the identity of the research subjects in your study, or to link research data to a specific individual in any way. Anonymity is a powerful protection for potential research subjects. (An anonymous subject is one whose identity is unknown even to the researcher, or the data or information collected cannot be linked in any way to a specific person). |

- E. Are subjects debriefed about the purposes, consequences, and benefits of the research? Debriefing refers to a mechanism for informing the research subjects of the results or conclusions, after the data is collected and analyzed, and the study is over. (If "no" explain why.) Attach copy of debriefing statement to be utilized.

**\*It is a requirement that you maintain all signed copies of informed consent documents for at least 3 years following the completion of your study. These documents must be available for examination and review by federal compliance officials.**

**IX. PROJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes                                 | No                                  | Does the project involve any of the following?   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Deception of subjects   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Shock or other forms of punishment  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Sexually explicit materials or questions about sexual orientation, sexual experience or sexual abuse            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Handling of money or other valuable commodities   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. Extraction or use of blood, other bodily fluids, or tissues   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f. Questions about any kind of illegal or illicit activity   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g. Purposeful creation of anxiety  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h. Any procedure that might be viewed as invasion of privacy   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. Physical exercise or stress   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | j. Administration of substances (food, drugs, etc.) to subjects  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | k. Any procedure that might place subjects at risk   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | l. Any form of potential abuse; i.e., psychological, physical, sexual  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | m. Is there potential for the data from this project to be published in a journal, presented at a conference, etc? |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | n. Use of surveys or questionnaires for data collection  |
- IF YES, PLEASE ATTACH!!**

**X. SUBJECT INFORMATION:** (If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you should explain them in one of the paragraphs above)

- | Yes                      | No                                  | Does the research involve subjects from any of the following categories?   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Under 18 years of age (these subjects require parental or guardian consent)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Over 65 years of age  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Physically or mentally disabled   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Economically or educationally disadvantaged   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | e. Unable to provide their own legal informed consent  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f. Pregnant females as target population   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g. Victims   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h. Subjects in institutions (e.g., prisons, nursing homes, halfway houses)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. Are research subjects in this activity students recruited from university classes or volunteer pools? If so, do you have a reasonable alternative(s) to participation as a research subject in your project, i.e., another activity such as writing or reading that would serve to protect students from unfair pressure or coercion to participate in this project? If you answered this question "Yes," explain any <u>alternatives options</u> for class credit for potential human subject volunteers in your study. (It is also important to remember that: Students must be free to choose <b>not</b> to participate in research that they have signed up for <b>at any time</b> without penalty. Communication of their decision can be conveyed in any manner, to include <b>simply not showing up</b> for the research.) |

- j. Are research subjects **audio** taped? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?  
Only the researcher and research assistants will have access to the tapes, notes, and transcripts. They will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list and the tapes will be destroyed.
- k. Are research subjects' images being recorded (video taped, photographed)? If yes, how do you plan to protect the recorded information and mitigate any additional risks?  
Only the researcher and research assistants will have access to the tapes, notes, and transcripts. They will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list and the tapes will be destroyed.

XI. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** Concerns have been growing that financial interests in research may threaten the safety and rights of human research subjects. Financial interests are not in them selves prohibited and may well be appropriate and legitimate. Not all financial interests cause Conflict of Interest (COI) or harm to human subjects. However, to the extent that financial interests may affect the welfare of human subjects in research, IRB's, institutions, and investigators must consider what actions regarding financial interests may be necessary to protect human subjects. Please answer the following questions:

- |                          |                                     |   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Yes</b>               | <b>No</b>                           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a. Do you or the institution have any proprietary interest in a potential product of this research, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, or licensing agreements? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b. Do you have an equity interest in the research sponsor (publicly held or a non-publicly held company)?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | c. Do you receive significant payments of other sorts, eg., grants, equipment, retainers for consultation and/or honoraria from the sponsor of this research?           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | d. Do you receive payment per participant or incentive payments?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | e. If you answered yes on any of the above questions, please provide adequate explanatory information so the IRB can assess any potential COI indicated above.          |

**XII. PROJECT COLLABORATORS:**

**A. KSU Collaborators – list anyone affiliated with KSU who is collecting or analyzing data:** (list all collaborators on the project, including co-principal investigators, undergraduate and graduate students)

Name:	Department:	Campus Phone:	Campus Email:
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**B. Non-KSU Collaborators:** (List all collaborators on your human subjects research project not affiliated with KSU in the spaces below. KSU has negotiated an Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), the federal office responsible for oversight of research involving human subjects. When research involving human subjects includes collaborators who are not employees or agents of KSU the activities of those unaffiliated individuals may be covered under the KSU Assurance only in accordance with a formal, written agreement of commitment to relevant human subject protection policies and IRB oversight. The Unaffiliated Investigators Agreement can be found and downloaded at <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/Unaffiliated%20Investigator%20Agreement.doc>

C.

The URCO must have a copy of the Unaffiliated Investigator Agreement on file for each non-KSU collaborator who is not covered by their own IRB and assurance with OHRP. Consequently, it is critical that you identify non-KSU collaborators, and initiate any coordination and/or approval process early, to minimize delays caused by administrative requirements.)

Name:	Organization:	Phone:	Institutional Email:

Does your non-KSU collaborator’s organization have an Assurance with OHRP? (for Federalwide Assurance and Multiple Project Assurance (MPA) listings of other institutions, please reference the OHRP website under Assurance Information at: <http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search>).

No  
 Yes If yes, Collaborator’s FWA or MPA # \_\_\_\_\_

Is your non-KSU collaborator’s IRB reviewing this proposal?

No  
 Yes If yes, IRB approval # \_\_\_\_\_

C. Exempt Projects: 45 CFR 46 identifies six categories of research involving human subjects that may be exempt from IRB review. The categories for exemption are listed here:

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/checklists/decisioncharts.html>. If you believe that your project qualifies for exemption, please indicate which exemption category applies (1-6). Please remember that only the IRB can make the final determination whether a project is exempt from IRB review, or not.

Exemption Category: 45 CFR 46.101 b 5

XIII. CLINICAL TRIAL Yes No  
(If so, please give product.)

**Export Controls Training:**

-The Provost has mandated that all KSU faculty/staff with a full-time appointment participate in the Export Control Program.

-If you are not in our database as having completed the Export Control training, this proposal will not be approved until your participation is verified.

-To complete the Export Control training, follow the instructions below:

Click on:

<http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/ecp/index.htm>

1. After signing into K-State Online, you will be taken to the Export Control Homepage
2. Read the directions and click on the video link to begin the program
3. Make sure you enter your name / email when prompted so that participation is verified

If you click on the link and are not taken to K-State Online, this means that you have already completed the Export Control training and have been removed from the roster. If this is the case, no further action is required.

-Can’t recall if you have completed this training? Contact the URCO at 785-532-3224 or [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu) and we will be happy to look it up for you.

**Post Approval Monitoring:** The URCO has a Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) program to help assure that activities are performed in accordance with provisions or procedures approved by the IRB. Accordingly, the URCO staff will arrange a PAM visit as appropriate; to assess compliance with approved activities.

**If you have questions, please call the University Research Compliance Office (URCO) at 532-3224, or [comply@ksu.edu](mailto:comply@ksu.edu)**

## INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

(Print this page separately because it requires a signature by the PI.)

P.I. Name: Lauri Baker

Title of Project: K-State Research & Extension Marketing of Extension's Story

XIV. **ASSURANCES:** As the Principal Investigator on this protocol, I provide assurances for the following:

- A. **Research Involving Human Subjects:** This project will be performed in the manner described in this proposal, and in accordance with the Federalwide Assurance FWA00000865 approved for Kansas State University available at <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov/polasur.htm#FWA>, applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. Any proposed deviation or modification from the procedures detailed herein must be submitted to the IRB, and be approved by the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) prior to implementation.
- B. **Training:** I assure that all personnel working with human subjects described in this protocol are technically competent for the role described for them, and have completed the required IRB training modules found on the URCO website at: <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/training/index.htm>. I understand that no proposals will receive final IRB approval until the URCO has documentation of completion of training by all appropriate personnel.
- C. **Extramural Funding:** If funded by an extramural source, I assure that this application accurately reflects all procedures involving human subjects as described in the grant/contract proposal to the funding agency. I also assure that I will notify the IRB/URCO, the KSU PreAward Services, and the funding/contract entity if there are modifications or changes made to the protocol after the initial submission to the funding agency.
- D. **Study Duration:** I understand that it is the responsibility of the Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) to perform continuing reviews of human subjects research as necessary. I also understand that as continuing reviews are conducted, it is my responsibility to provide timely and accurate review or update information when requested, to include notification of the IRB/URCO when my study is changed or completed.
- E. **Conflict of Interest:** I assure that I have accurately described (in this application) any potential Conflict of Interest that my collaborators, the University, or I may have in association with this proposed research activity.
- F. **Adverse Event Reporting:** I assure that I will promptly report to the IRB / URCO any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others that involve the protocol as approved. Unanticipated or Adverse Event Form is located on the URCO website at: <http://www.k-state.edu/research/comply/irb/forms/index.htm>. In the case of a serious event, the Unanticipated or Adverse Events Form may follow a phone call or email contact with the URCO.
- G. **Accuracy:** I assure that the information herein provided to the Committee for Human Subjects Research is to the best of my knowledge complete and accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal Investigator Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

## **Appendix B - Moderators Guide**

## **Kansas Ag Mediation Services Focus Groups**

### **Moderator Guide and Questioning Route**

**Moderator reads:** Hello and welcome to our focus group session. Thank you for taking time to join our discussion today about factors that influence your career choice. My name is Lauri and I am a professor in ag communications at Kansas State University. Assisting me today is Lana, a graduate student also from Kansas State.

You have been invited here because you can provide valuable information about Kansas Ag Mediation Services (KAMS). The purpose of today's discussion is to determine the direction of KAMS in the future.

Before we begin, let me share some things that will make our discussions easier and more productive. There are no right or wrong answers, but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Please speak up and only one person should talk at a time. We're audio recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. We'll be on a first-name basis, and in our later reports there will not be any names attached to comments. You may be assured of confidentiality.

My role here is to ask questions and listen. I won't be participating in the conversation, but I want you to feel free to talk with one another. I'll be asking questions, and I'll be moving the discussion from one question to the next. Sometimes there is a tendency in these discussions for some people to talk a lot and some people not to say much. But it is important for us to hear from each of you today because you have different experiences. So, if one of you is sharing a lot, I may ask you to let others respond. And if you aren't saying much, I may ask for your opinion.

Our session will last about one hour. If you have your cell phone with you, we would appreciate it if you could turn it off while we are in the discussion.

Let's begin by getting to know more about you. I would like to go around the room and have you introduce yourself. Please tell us your name, where you are from, and your role in agriculture.

### **Kansas Ag Mediation Services**

I am now going to ask you more specific questions related to your experiences and/or knowledge of Kansas Ag Mediation Services.

- How many of you have heard about KAMS? Raise your hands.
- Those of you who raised your hand, what have your experiences been with KAMS?
- Have you used any other organization offering mediation services?
- If so, what was it for?

Probes:

- o What services do you already know are offered by KAMS?

- o What are your perceptions of the organization?

### **KAMS Information**

*The following is a brief summary of the KAMS program:*

The Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services (KAMS) is a confidential resource that helps producers with financial and legal questions. A toll-free hotline, 1-800-321-FARM (3276), gives immediate confidential and free access to a professional staff for referrals to various services, including: mediation opportunities, financial counseling and legal assistance. Specifically a KAMS staff attorney is available to visit about ag related concerns.

The program's goal is to help resolve difficult situations using mediation, a voluntary confidential process using a neutral third party to help parties identify concerns and explore options and solutions.

KAMS, in conjunction with the K-State Farm Analyst Program, offers farm financial analysis through use of the FinPak computer software program. Through an agreement with Kansas Legal Services direct legal representation to Kansas farmers and ranchers on a reduced fee basis depending on the producer's level of income.

Administered by K-State Research and Extension the program is available to Kansas farmers, ranchers and the ag community. All calls to KAMS are free and all information shared is confidential.

- What additional services do you see necessary or useful from this qualified staff? (List)

In the future, KAMS is seeking to expand their services. These additional services might include:

- Increase overall awareness of available resources and assistance available from unit
- A central place to call for agricultural information
- Pro-active, strategic planning assistance for farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses not experiencing financial distress (e.g., loan denial, loan restructure)
- Family farm transition planning
- Family farm mediations. Including, but not limited to, communication or management issues; dissolution of partnerships; family estate trust problems; division of property among heirs; and, conflict regarding transition of the farm.
- Landlord/tenant disputes
- Assistance with leases, boundary line disputes, or other situations not directly related to the financial feasibility of the operation
- Beginning farmer and veterans seeking to return/enter into farming issues

- Staff attorney available to assist with general agricultural related legal and financial questions
- Trainings for mediators interested in being trained as agricultural mediators
- Conducting additional workshops, trainings or seminars

The hope is to be able to seek out and secure additional sources of income or venue to expand the services and programing.

Based on these services and your ideas, KAMS is government funded through a small grant by the USDA. KAMS does not receive any other funding. Thus, any and all activities and programing must fall under the parameter of the KAMS grant and carried out utilizing grant funds. As additional states across the country adopt certified agricultural mediation programs, and as economic belt-tightening in D.C. occur, portions of the national mediation program funding has reduced. Additionally, USDA has become increasingly restrictive as to how any grant funds may be spent.

### **Name Change**

The intention with a unit name development is to create an “umbrella” name under which the KAMS program would be one service, or aspect of the unit. We will discuss different options for creating an umbrella brand.

An umbrella brand is a parent brand that is used on diverse kinds of products which has a unique brand name and identity of their own. (Taken from <http://definitions.uslegal.com/u/umbrella-brand%20/>)

Examples of umbrella brands:

- Kraft foods (Cheez Whiz, Cool Whip, Planters Peanut Butter, Jell-O)
- Merck (Coppertone, Claritin, Banamine)

Questions:

- Is there an umbrella brand name that makes sense for KAMS?
- What do you like about these names?
- What do you dislike about these names?
- How do these names differentiate from Kansas Ag Mediation Services?
- Do you have a preference on the listed ideas and why?
- What do the different names mean to you? (Do they accurately depict the goals of KAMS?)

Probe:

- In your opinion, does it make sense for this group to have an umbrella brand?

*Screen: We will now project different name options on the screen for you to consider:*

- *Strategic Farm Planning Center*
- *Kansas Ag Resource Center*
- *Ag Connections for Kansas*

### **Tag Line**

While developing a new umbrella brand name, KAMS is developing an accompanying “tag line”.

Example of tag lines include:

- “Nothing runs like a Deere” -John Deere
- “The business breed” -Angus

Questions:

- What ideas do you have for a tag line for KAMS?
- What do you like about these tag lines?
- What do you dislike about these names?
- Do you have a preference on the listed tag lines and why?
- What do the different tag lines mean to you?

*Screen: We will now project different tag line options on the screen for you to consider:*

- *“Managing for the future”*
- *“Connecting people with resources”*

### **Marketing Ideas**

Thank you for all your input so far. Now we would appreciate your suggestions to determine where to promote KAMS.

- What would be the most appropriate place to promote these services?

Probes:

- o Broadcast, such as radio and TV
- o Internet, such as websites, e-mail, and social media

- o Print, such as newspaper inserts, brochures, mailings, posters
- o Any other communication, such as billboards, movie theater ads, workshops/presentations and other signs
- If you were searching for these sort of ag services, where would you look?
  - o Probe: What keywords would you use to search?
- What materials would you respond to? Where would you find that?
  - o Probe: Do you think social media is effective?
- What are some effective marketing tools have you seen used for outreach?
- How might this program network with lenders, ag businesses and producers?
- What information or would spark your interest to know more about the program?
- What kinds of trainings or educational workshop topics would you like to see the program conduct in your area?
- What other services would you like to see provided by this program?
- What future trends do you see impacting farm families, ag businesses and rural communities where this program services could offer assistance?
- Can you see other cooperative linkages that would be appropriate for this new umbrella brand?

### **Concluding Discussion**

As we've talked today and seen some examples of marketing messages:

- Do you have any suggestions or ideas that we have not discussed?

I am now going to try to summarize the main points from today's discussion. (key messages and big ideas that developed from the discussion)...

- Is this an adequate summary?

Moderator reads: Thank you for taking time out of your day to share your opinions. Your participation is greatly appreciated and has provided valuable insight into this topic. As you leave, please pick up your incentive as a token of our appreciation. Thanks again.

## **Appendix C - Informed Consent Template**

# KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

## INFORMED CONSENT TEMPLATE

**PROJECT TITLE:** Kansas Agricultural Media Services Branding and Marketing Study

**APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT:** 3/28/13

**EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:** Exempt

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):** Dr. Lauri Baker, Assistant Professor,  
Department of Communications, 307  
Umberger Hall, Manhattan, KS, 66506-3402

**CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:** 785-532-1140, lmbaker@k-state.edu

**IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION:** Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on  
Research Involving Human Subjects, 203  
Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University,  
Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

**SPONSOR OF PROJECT:** K-State Research and Extension and Kansas Ag Media Services (KAMS)

**PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:** To determine the most appropriate services and marketing methods for  
Kansas Ag Media Services

**PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:** The focus group will allow you to discuss your opinions  
in an open and receptive setting. You will be asked to  
share about your experience with KAMS. You will also  
be asked for your opinion about the future of KAMS.  
Your comments and suggestions will be used to help K-  
State Research & Extension improve its efforts to share  
the story of Extension.

**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO  
SUBJECT:**

None

**LENGTH OF STUDY:** 1-1½ hours

**RISKS ANTICIPATED:** There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study.

**BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:** There are no anticipated benefits to participating in the study.

**EXTENT OF  
CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You will  
be assigned a code number. Your name will not be connected to any comments.  
The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file. The  
discussion will be audio recorded. An assistant moderator will take detailed  
notes. Only the researcher and research assistants will have access to the tapes,  
notes, and transcripts. They will be kept in a locked file. When the study is  
completed and the data have been analyzed, the list and the tapes will be

destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

**IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS:**

na

**PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:**

na

**TERMS OF PARTICIPATION:** I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant

**Participant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness to Signature: (project staff)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_