

Part B - Project Proposal

Project Mission: A snapshot of the project's intention (50 words max)*

We run Media Education workshops for UK farmers. Our aim is to build confidence and communication skills at the grassroots of an industry that struggles to be seen. We build connections between farmers and the media, helping bridge the disconnect between urban consumers and the people who produce their food.

What is the main aim of your project?

Situation (250 words)*

Where are we now? Highlight the problem you are addressing – the reality, current situation, statistics, stories.

Just Farmers is a pioneering and disruptive communications project that works.

We are not:

Media Training. We do not control 'the message', we don't believe a free media can be 'managed' and we don't tell farmers what to say. We are not a PR company.

We are:

Media Education. We give farmers the tools and confidence to tell their own stories, in their own words. We believe in open and honest communication that comes from the heart. We build relationships based on mutual respect and cooperation.

Just Farmers operates in an overlooked and ignored space – the gap between urban and rural communities. We bring people closer together by bridging two very different worlds:

1) Farmers

We run fully-funded workshops for diverse groups of farmers and growers, covering storytelling, story pitching, social media, how to shoot and edit films on a smartphone and what to expect if a TV crew or a radio producer turns up on the farm.

2) The Media

We connect journalists with independent farmer case studies who can talk about their farms in an unbiased way. Just Farmers has no political or commercial agenda – we are not selling anything, and we are not a campaign group. We simply build connections through our website and online directory, which verified members of the media can register with for free.

Complication (250 words)*

What is the underlying problem? You must clearly highlight the problem that you are attempting to solve and for whom.

There is a 'disconnect' between farmers and the mainstream media. It works in two ways:

- 1) Too many farmers are overly distrustful of journalists. They feel the media is out to get them, or that activists will target them if they identify themselves or speak out in public. It makes some farmers overly defensive and reluctant to share their stories. Due to the isolated nature of their work, farmers can lack confidence and struggle to articulate themselves in a way that connects with urban audiences. This all leads to a lack of transparency.
- 2) The mainstream media, largely based in towns and cities, prioritises its largest audience – more than 80% of the UK population who live in urban areas. Journalists and programme makers may know very little about farming and rural life and when stories are routinely viewed through an urban lens, it can lead to stereotyping and over-simplification. Time-poor journalists often have few contacts to call upon and can over-rely on farm unions and industry lobbyists for comment. Conversely, this can contribute to even more distrust as these inherently political organisations are often seen as having a party line and a hidden agenda.

In 2016/17, our founder Anna Jones did a Nuffield Farming Scholarship and travelled the world studying the coverage of farming issues in the global media:

<https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/reports/gb/2016/help-or-hinder-how-mainstream-media-portrays-farming-public>

Her findings led to the formation of Just Farmers, with start-up funding awarded by the Frank Parkinson Agricultural Trust and subsequent grants from the Prince's Countryside Fund and Mercer Family Charitable Foundation.

Solution (250 words)*

The Solution to the Complication is the substance of your main point. This is where you explain what you do or have done already and what you plan to do.

We recruit and train 24 farmers a year, giving them the tools and confidence to share their stories with the traditional media or create their own digital content for social media. To date, we have trained 84 farmers from around the UK.

We are diverse, inclusive, and non-judgemental. Just Farmers represents every farming sector and system - big and small; organic and conventional; high input intensive and low input regenerative; raising livestock indoors and outdoors.

We tackle common fears and misconceptions about working with the media and ask our farmers to step outside their rural comfort zone by hosting the first workshop in multicultural, inner-city Bristol. We visit a vegan restaurant and a city farm, introducing our farmers to urban food and farming culture.

Our groups build strong bonds of friendship. The farmers support each other through the process, share their worries and learn from one another. Just Farmers has been called 'free therapy', which is vitally important considering the mental health challenges in the farming industry.

There are more than 200 members of the media registered on the Just Farmers website. Since the project began in 2018, our farmers have had more than 500 media and public appearances. These range from national newspapers like The Guardian and The Times, to national TV and radio broadcasters such as BBC Breakfast, GB News, Countryfile, BBC Radio 4 and Radio 5 Live, to regional news programmes, podcasts and farming trade press like Farmers Weekly and Farmers Guardian, and even international news outlets.

Part C - Wider Support

How would the Stephen Lloyd Award network of partners' support be beneficial to your project? (250 words max)*

Just Farmers is truly unique, there is nothing else like it. The project is run by three creative media professionals. Founder Anna Jones is a journalist and former BBC TV producer/director and radio broadcaster; our editor Emily Davies is a journalist, PR and marketing professional and volunteer director Alex Price is a TV producer and cameraman. We are building Just Farmers from scratch, on a totally innovative idea that works and has a proven positive impact on the ground. Three years into the project (not counting Covid!) we need more skills – business management is a whole new world for us. We are happy to be completely open and up front about our lack of experience in running a business or organisation. We are creative people with big, bold ideas. Our passion and personality has got Just Farmers where it is today, but in order to take the next step up, we have a lot to learn about running an organisation. We would benefit enormously from support with business planning, financial management, legal support – anything you could offer would be valuable. With more confidence in this area, we could do so much more and really push Just Farmers forward.

Part D - Financial Justification

In general terms, please explain how the funding would be used to carry out your project. (50 words max)*

Up until recently, there was only one paid, part-time member of the team. Thanks to some new funding, our founder is now paid one day a week and our editor has gone from two to three days a week. While this is fantastic, we desperately need to fund more staff and bring in new skills so we can start to grow the project beyond the start-up phase.

ENDS//