



American Vaulting Association
Region IV Board Retreat
November 11-12, 2021
Brighton, Colorado

Summary Report

Summary, Purpose and structure:

The American Vaulting Association Region IV Board organized a retreat at the end of 2021 for its Board members to reflect on the status of vaulting in Region IV and to initiate a new strategic planning process for the Region. The retreat was facilitated by 3 Stories Consulting (<https://www.3storiesconsulting.com/>), with Leslie Lewis providing the services as on site facilitator, who also wears the hat of vaulter parent and is a longtime competition announcer.

In order to prepare for the retreat, the Board distributed a membership survey to all of its 164 members in October, with an approximate 43% response rate. This feedback from the members was woven into the retreat to guide the discussions and decisions.

The structure of the retreat was a two day in person meeting held at the Marriott Fairfield in Brighton, Colorado, with reduced room rates provided by the Marriott property, which is managed by a parent of one of our Region's vaulters. The out of state Board members flew into the Denver International Airport, which was only 30 minutes from the hotel conference property. One member was not able to fly out for the weekend, but instead was fully integrated through Zoom technology with input and participation in all sessions. All Colorado participants drove each day to the retreat. All in state participants were no more than about 1 hour 15 minutes from the location.

American Vaulting Association
Region IV Board Retreat
November 11-12, 2021
Marriott Fairfield Inn & Suites Denver NorthEast
Brighton, Colorado

Attendance:

Loree Crow, President; Rosie Brown (Via Zoom), Vice President ; Ciana Dodgion, Treasurer; Andi Fineran, Secretary; Lee Dudley, Colorado Representative, Frank Pace, Texas Representative; Rachel Davis, Arkansas/Oklahoma Representative; Greta Shryock, New Mexico Representative; Jordan Hobbs, AVA Board Region 4 Liaison; Leslie Lewis (3 Stories Consulting), Facilitator

Agenda:

Day 1: Saturday November 11

1. Impromptu Networking
2. Common Understanding – Synthesizing survey results
3. State SWOT reports
4. Framing – Building our Foundation for strategic planning
5. Wicked Questions - Examine the paradoxes inherent in the ecosystem of vaulting
6. Working Lunch – Appreciative interviews
7. Planning Session 1 – Choose 2 priorities/questions from Framework (#4)
8. Planning Session 1 Presentations
9. Troika Consulting

Day 2: Sunday November 12

1. 9 whys
2. Planning session # 2 – Planning for final mission priority
3. Working Lunch - TRIZ
4. Now What? Loose ends, Next Steps, communications

Following, you will find the summarized results of the Retreat, as developed into the Strategic Plan Framework.

The mission statement of AVA Region IV was reviewed and used as the grounding framework for the weekend's planning work.

Region IV Mission Statement:

We strive to promote the sport of vaulting, good sportsmanship, and create an inclusive environment to all in our region and across the United States.

Strategic Plan framework

3 Priorities established for Region IV based on the Board mission.

1. Promotion of the Sport of Vaulting
2. Promotion of Good Sportsmanship
3. Creation of an Environment of Inclusion

1. Promotion of the Sport of Vaulting

Goal:

Provide education and resources to existing clubs to promote the sport within our region.

Strategy:

Create State level educational events to begin in 2022, in conjunction with recognized competitions and based on needs of the particular state.

1. Texas - March 2022 (with small funfest)
2. New Mexico – June 2, 2022 – June 5, 2022 (with Expo NM AVA competition)
3. Colorado - Date TBD 2022 (stand alone event)
4. Develop a “Spirit of Vaulting” event (larger educational/demo event) as full Region event in 2023.

Educational events will include trainings for:

- Vaulters
- Horses
- Lungers
- Competition Management
- Coaches

2. Promotion of Good Sportsmanship

Goal:

Make sportsmanship a priority/habit/value for all involved in Region IV vaulting.

Strategies:

1: Emphasis on Participation over Results

- Sportsmanship awards/recognition at regional competitions
- Recognition levels that don't involve competition
- If we put enough emphasis on rewarding for sportsmanship, it makes it “bigger” in everyone's minds.
- Create Social media/web spotlights that emphasize the “journey”
- Promote and build upon existing AVA Medal testing process, again making a big deal out of those who medal.
- Explore promoting the USEF lettering program through Region.

2: Maintain and increase interconnectedness between clubs:

- Develop non-competitive events to increase interconnectedness (Spirit of Vaulting)
- More mingling of coaches/parents/vaulters across full region, through events that draw everyone.
- Develop additional smaller educational events within the states.

#3: Encourage top-down sportsmanship

- Define best practices/expectations for all roles regarding sportsmanship behaviors.
- Coaching/leadership training and educational opportunities – have resources available and have specific sessions for coaches training.
- Training for competition managers to learn how to enforce sportsmanship at competitions
- Hold formal coaches meeting at competitions for coaches, lungers, volunteers, etc. regarding sportsmanship expectations at competitions

4: Develop awareness of what is embodied in “Healthy” competition:

- Good sportsmanship is recognizing wellness in ourselves & others; and speaking up.
 - Physical –injuries, nutrition/ dehydration, fatigue, other physical ailments, ...
 - Mental – body image, stress, fear, anxiety, pressure (external), burn out,

3. Creation of an Environment of Inclusion

Inclusion Goal #1 – Create Inclusion Opportunities in Region IV.

Strategies:

- Increase availability of coaches in training w/scholarships for training opportunities.
- Amplify website/social media
- Provide educational events
- Develop/encourage competitions of different levels
- Foster mentorship
- Develop scholarships for vaulters in challenging situations

Inclusion Goal # 2 – Create opportunities for vaulters to progress along different trajectories (to meet differing goals/needs)

Strategies:

- Create structure for different trajectories
 - Help build the different roads/paths that vaulters can travel to meet their goals.
 - Articulate the different paths
 - Build educational opportunities to support the different paths

Action Plan

Next Steps for developing a Strategic plan that includes the framework developed during the retreat:

- Task forces created to work on the three priorities.
- Communication strategy:
 - Monthly Board meetings
 - Task forces hold meetings between Board meetings, and report out at each Board meeting with the action steps.

Task Forces

- **Sportsmanship** (Education materials & components, healthy competition, awards).
Chair: Lee Dudley. Members: Andi Fineran, Rosie Brown
- **Promotional** (Social media, website, email) Chair: Andi Fineran (social media).
Members: Loree Crow (website)
- **Educational** Events (Texas, New Mexico, Colorado) Co-Chairs: Greta Shryock & Rosie Brown. Members: Jordan Hobbs, Rachel Davis, Ciana Dodgion
- **Trajectories** (Coaches in training, Funfest, other competition levels, Mentors/clinicians)
Chair: Loree Crow. Members: Rachel Davis, Greta Shryock, Jordan Hobbs
- **Diversity/Equity/Inclusion** (scholarships, Media plan, Outreach & education).
Chair: Frank Pace. Members: Lee Dudley, Greta Shryock, Leslie Lewis (resource)
- **Competitions** (Octoberfest, Regional Championship, ...) Chair: Ciana Dodgion.
Members: Loree Crow

Appendix A State SWOT reports

The board members were asked in advance to consider these questions and prepare a State report prior to the retreat:

Strengths: What are the strengths of vaulting in your state? Where does your state shine or has your state shone in the past?

Weaknesses: What are the weaknesses of vaulting in your state? Where does your state lag?

Obstacles/Threats: What are the obstacles to vaulting in your state? Are these new? Have they always been there?

Opportunities: What opportunities do you see to increase the robustness of vaulting in your state?

New Mexico SWOT Report

Greta Shryock and Rachel Davis

Strengths

- Creativity, Fun, Performance, Education
- Prioritizes fun and training events. Focuses on personal best and development vs competition.
- Large and well established team with an experienced/knowledgeable coach. Everyone works well together and there is a non-competitive dynamic.. Connections to non-vaulting instructors for cross training. Innovative thinking. Supportive/experienced parents who volunteer. Diverse team (I added this one after the meeting).

Weaknesses

- Lack of teams, coaches, horses and lungers.
- Limited access to vaulting due to only having 1 team in the state. VDS doesn't have an indoor arena which limits year round training. Lack of access to more local competitions/events.

Opportunities

- Large room for growth. Help start other teams and train more coaches, lungers, and horses.

Obstacles

- No one wants to start new teams. VDS doesn't have enough help, money, or resources to grow larger. Having to travel long distances to competitions. Lack of access to quality training outside of VDS. Other teams and states no longer support NM events (other than a couple people)
- making competitions expensive and irrelevant. Greta is BURNT OUT

Colorado SWOT Report

Jorden Hobbs, Ciana Dodgion, Lee Dudley, Andi Fineran, Loree Crow

Strengths

- **Demographics/vaulters and coaches:**
 - Large base compared to other states. High vaulter numbers
 - High number of clubs.
 - Many top coaches and vaulters
 - Deep base of training and coaching, which leads to development of some the country's best vaulters over the past couple of years.
 - Many present and past vaulters who have a lot to offer younger vaulters for coaching/clinics/teaching opportunities.
 - Parents intrinsically involved due to demographics of typical vaulter
- **Geography:** State's location in US is very central. Many possible vaulters all up and down the front range.
- **Vaulter recruitment**
 - Large numbers of vaulters that then generate additional interest in the sport
 - Lots of new vaulters developed through some clubs who make good use of social media, demos, other vaulter recruitment.
 - Plenty of demand for vaulting in the various towns (Ft Collins, Brighton, Longmont) close to the vaulting clubs
- **Competitions:**
 - Consistency in competition scheduling:
 - Competitions that are very well-run
 - These are all at known facilities, which help with planning.
 - Experienced competition managers
 - Large pool of volunteers from parent pool
 - Having clubs in close proximity with several competitions that are close to that population creates "healthy" between-club competition, generating excitement, visibility, short term goals that keep vaulters motivated and as the vaulters continue working and gaining skill, they start to increase their vaulting and become more involved.
- **Leadership**
 - Dedicated Colorado individuals serving on Board of Directors, some consistency for knowledge, some new for innovation
 - Lots of connections in our community to other equestrian sports and folks.

Weaknesses

- **Communication/Collaboration**
 - Lack of interconnectedness between clubs/coaches, not much collaboration.
 - Lack of communication and clinics in-between competition dates / in the off season clubs don't come together.
 - Little outreach to other equestrian sports
- **Competitions**

- Barriers to creating new competitions:
- Some competitions are stagnant.
- Late planning of competition dates.
- Not enough opportunities for volunteer training. Volunteers/new parents feel lost.
- Lack of high level/USEF competitions for vaulters seeking pathways scores leads those vaulters to have to travel out of state
- **Leadership**
 - Workload. Lots of work (competitions run) in the region done by a very few “overworked” people.
- **Demographics/Group Dynamics**
 - Large contingent of vaulters trying to become elite level and wanting to compete internationally is creating tension points in the region. Perception of divide between "elite" and "everyone else" vaulters/clubs and the idea that elite aspirations of some make the sport "not fun" for everyone.
 - Sport is relatively small in Colorado, even though Colorado has more participation than many other states, it is relatively small compared to other sports, even other equestrian sports.
 - Interpersonal conflicts between coaches and coaches, between vaulters and coaches
 - Conflicts are challenging because there are few options for vaulting. Everyone is interconnected, and some persons wear multiple hats and therefore have power in various settings.
 - Vaulters switching clubs/coaches creates emotional ripple effects due to “family-like” environment in vaulting.
- **Geography:** State’s geography means that western side of state is isolated from front range.
- **Resources**
 - Few high level horses in the state and few high level coaches in the state (compared to California).
 - Resource stress (low resources/high demand) creates tension points between higher level vaulters and lower level vaulters (and their coaches).
 - Lack of high level resources pushes vaulters to travel out of state to seek opportunities, costing more.
 - More lower level and prospective lower level vaulters exist than there is capacity on quality low level horses.
 - No system for resource sharing/vaulter transfer
 - Lack of resources for compensation (competition managers, lungers, coaches even sometimes)
- **Recruitment:**
 - Little formal or strategic advertising/marketing
 - Lack of social media promotion.
 - Vaulting still has low awareness in Colorado
 - Not enough demos in visible locations
- **Where Colorado Lags**
 - Number of clubs with high level horses
 - Number of coaching programs/coaches
 - Availability of Movie training
 - Clinic/educational opportunities lacking many years
 - Number of competitions

- No barrel competitions
- Not as much representation on AVA Board, USEF committees

Obstacles/Threats

- **Always been there:**
 - **Sport is expensive** because horses are expensive.
 - **Lack of visibility** across the equestrian spectrum
 - **Small numbers of personnel** combined with lack of purposeful training of necessary personnel resources (managers, show secretaries, coaches, lungers) creates ripple effects: so that a single person choosing to do something (or not), such as starting a club or a running a show, can measurably change the face of the entire region.
- **Newer:**
 - **Increased tensions since creation of Junior Worlds competition in 2015:**
 - Intrinsic tensions/division between "international" levels competitors (and their intense need for resources) and the AVA level vaulters
 - Lack of cohesive vision so that vaulters do not have to choose between the "2 tracks"
 - Travel expenses for vaulters is enormous because of need to travel to compete at Nationally competitive level.
 - **High level horses** are becoming increasingly expensive, making a huge investment, which is out of the league of many/most Colorado clubs
 - Expertise is also needed to develop high level horses.

Opportunities

- **Profitable competitions means that the Region has funds to invest**
 - Just need to decide what we want to do with that money to grow the region and sport here
- **Educational events:** Strong base of vaulters and clubs means that we can produce educational events/clinics for collaboration between clubs and to the rest of the region.
 - Organize, promote, or host more learning opportunities for clubs and vaulters at all levels - upper level, lower level and recreational vaulters. Bring back the Spirit of Vaulting!
 - Teaching competition management clinics again to grow our base of people who can assist with running shows.
- **Outreach/promos/demos**
 - Plenty of opportunities to do more demonstrations. I.E. Horsepark/Stockshow/ Etc.
 - "Region 4 may need to give \$ to coaches to take vaulters to demos--as they are giving up practice money."
- **Opportunity to build the most competitive vaulters and be the strongest state** in the country as measured by number of vaulters and success of those vaulters, potentially even with (relatively) affordable options built in-- IF coaches, horses and lungers are developed.

Texas SWOT Report

Frank Pace, Rosie Brown

Strengths

- Four people with 15 plus years of active involvement in vaulting
 - Rosie - 30 years off, and on – vaulter, coach, clinician, Regional Supervisor, Region IV President, AVA and USEF committee member, currently in AVA Judges program
 - Alex – 16 years – Gold level international vaulter
 - Frank – 15 years – founder/cc Star Pacesetters, there are currently five vaulting clubs that were started by ex-members of GSP, previous AVA Board member
 - Kim Wellman – 14 years – International lunger, trainer, coach
- Sudden quick growth of vaulting
- The huge number of horses in the state
- Numerous demos at community events, major livestock shows/rodeos
- All but one (Houston area) of the current clubs are located on the I-35 corridor
- We furnished two horses and vaulters to the Friendship Team for WEG 2010

Weaknesses

- Cowboy/western horse culture
- Distances
 - the distance along I-35 from San Antonio to DFW is the same as that from the northern border to the southern border of Colorado
 - The distance from Houston to DFW is only 40 miles shorter
- Competitions/clinics
- Lack of affordable/available facilities with suitable footing/stabling/size/extra arenas
- Lack of experienced personnel (New clubs)
- No nearby judges/clinicians (cost of airfare)
- Minimal racial diversity
- No boys!

Obstacles

- As above
- Non good way to let rest of equestrian world know that vaulting exists
- Major Stock Shows/Fairs/Rodeos wanted competitions instead of demos.

Opportunities

- Because of number of new clubs, competitions at Major Stock Shows/Fairs/Rodeos are now possible
- More collaboration between old and new clubs
- More unrecognized competitions/clinics (held by newer clubs)
- Texas “Spirit of Vaulting”