



Business Plan

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Steward Holdings (US), Inc.

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1. Company Description

1.1 Mission

Steward's mission is to promote economic and environmental stewardship through regenerative agriculture.

The end goal of all Steward's services is to build durable local economies based on generational land stewardship and resilient food systems. Steward seeks to achieve this goal by increasing the diversity, sustainability, and profitability of businesses built upon the principles of regenerative agriculture (see Appendix, Figure 1).

1.2 Company Overview

Steward equips regenerative farms with the resources they need to grow. As a financial partner, we offer access to capital as well as expert support services that enable agriculture businesses to expand and sustain their operations. Steward originates, services, and administers private commercial loans to support these businesses, utilizing various commercial lending exemptions to operate compliantly. Unique to Steward's lending model, impact-driven individuals are able to join this effort and provide direct financial support to these businesses through Steward's user-friendly online platform.

The Steward platform hosts a growing community of regenerative farms, ranches, fisheries, and other producers, and we have provided more than \$11 million in funding to over 60 businesses through the participation of our user base.

Steward partners with and provides support to businesses that embody our core principles of regenerative agriculture:

- **Regenerative:** Methods that increase biodiversity, enrich soils, improve watershed health, sequester more carbon than they release, and enhance ecosystem services.
- **Sustainable:** Approaches that sustain working lands, natural resources, and communities.
- **Human-scale:** Operations that engage more "hands on the land" establish a productive and restorative scale of agricultural management.
- **Appropriate:** Right-sized, suitable for a specific community, location, or operation.
- **Equitable:** Systems that support underserved groups and empower communities.

[We are proud to be a Certified B Corporation](#), and uphold the movement for an inclusive, equitable, and regenerative economy.

1.3 The Steward Team

Steward operates as a wholly remote company with our current team dispersed across the US, UK, and New Zealand. A remote company from the outset, we have benefited from access to leading talent across the globe. The core Steward team has international experience and multidisciplinary backgrounds in finance, agriculture, technology, and law.

(For full organization chart, see Appendix, Figure 2.)

Company Leadership



Dan Miller
Founder & CEO

From 2010 to 2015, Dan was Co-Founder, President, and a Director of *Fundrise*, the first and largest US real estate crowdfunding platform, which has raised more than \$2.5 billion from 300,000+ investors. Dan founded Steward to combine his expertise in online fundraising, real estate, and technology with his passion for agriculture and equitable food systems, which stems from his maternal family, who has been farming on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, US, since the 1880s.



David Hutcheson
Chief Operating Officer

David has spent years working in the tech sector, focused on early-stage organizations in non-profit and social impact. Initially a client of David's, Steward's mission and commitment to innovation attracted David to join full-time in 2020, leading Steward's customer experience efforts and then product development. David now oversees business operations as COO.



Bridget Helgerson
Senior VP Operations

After spending seven years as a CPA with PricewaterhouseCoopers in both Los Angeles and London, Bridget joined the Steward team to lead operations. In between her time at PwC and Steward, Bridget worked for both a sustainable restaurant & retreat in the forests of Sweden as well as a food rescue nonprofit in Oregon, ultimately leading her to the impact-driven work of Steward.



Ryan Anderson
Senior VP Services

Ryan joined Steward in 2021 after serving as the Chief of Staff to Rep. Rashida Tlaib for the 116th Congress. Previously, Ryan was a co-founder of ACRE, a sustainable farm selling rare and heirloom varieties of produce to some of Detroit's top chefs. Ryan has also fought for the success of other urban growers, co-founding the Corktown Farmers' Market to feature food exclusively grown and made within the city.



John Kramer
General Counsel

John is a securities lawyer with 30 years of experience as in-house counsel supporting private equity, capital markets, asset management, and early stage businesses. Among other companies, John worked at JPMorgan Chase for nearly 15 years. John holds a BA from Colby College and a JD from the Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law.



Ryan Gallagher
VP Marketing

Ryan has over 20 years of marketing experience, both in advertising agencies such as Weiden + Kennedy and running his own brand consultancy supporting mission-driven companies around the world. Ryan has also served in the Peace Corps working with subsistence farmers in West Africa.



Aaron Newton
Agriculture Lead

Aaron previously served as the Local Food System Program Coordinator for Cabarrus County, NC which included managing an organic vegetable research and education farm and making policy and program recommendations to county staff and elected officials. He serves as Steward's agriculture expert, where he manages the Agriculture Due Diligence process and educates the broader Steward team about regenerative agriculture practices.



Jerome Guilbot
Technology Lead

With 12 years of experience in software development, Jerome has an expertise in PHP programming language, namely Symfony, which is the core framework upon which Steward's technology is built.

2. Market Analysis

2.1 Problem Addressed

Despite the rising consumer demand for high quality and environmentally sound agriculture, there is not yet an equal shift in availability of capital for farmers who are already practicing or transitioning to regenerative agriculture. The Steward platform bridges this divide to meet the needs of both impact lenders and regenerative farmers.

2.2 Our Customers

Borrowers

Steward's borrowers are human-scale regenerative farmers, ranchers, fishers, and producers throughout the United States. Steward also finances food systems and value-added infrastructure such as processing facilities and food hubs. Such smaller scale, diversified operations are often overlooked in the existing loan market, which instead is tailored to support commodity crops and the unsustainable practices of Big Ag.

Lenders

Those participating on the Steward platform include sophisticated lenders, high-net-worth individuals, family offices and foundations, all of whom aim both to make an impact and to receive some financial benefit. Many values-aligned lenders previously lacked opportunities to fund regenerative agriculture. This is due to costly regulations that limited availability of financial opportunities to large, public agribusiness companies that profit from extractive, commodity agriculture.

2.3 Market Opportunity

By supporting farms that operate at the intersection of these key drivers—human-scale, using regenerative practices, with a focus on direct sales—Steward addresses an underserved yet critical part of the agricultural sector that is greatly in need of financing. Of the [2.02 million farms](#) currently operating in the US, [89.2%](#) (~1.80 million) are small family farms with annual gross income of \$350,000 or less. The households operating these farms typically rely on off-farm sources for the [majority of their household income](#). This market of farmers is only one component of the greater food system, within which operates a variety of non-farm businesses and other potential Steward customers.

With regards to the other side of Steward's customer base, our impact-driven lenders, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) could become a [\\$1 trillion category by 2030](#), with over \$21 billion moving into ESG strategies in the first quarter of 2021 alone. ESG opportunities now account for [1/3 of U.S. assets under management \(AUM\)](#). Despite this growth and substantial demand, opportunities focused specifically on regenerative agriculture remain limited.

The United States is currently Steward's primary target market; however, our funding model may be replicated in markets around the world once appropriate, local regulations have been explored.

2.4 Competitive Advantage

Steward develops proprietary technology and conducts a highly specialized underwriting process, which puts us in a leveraged position to excel in this market. Additionally, our team's experience and the growing community Steward fosters provide us a clear advantage going forward.

- **First mover advantage**
Steward is the first and only platform that enables a broad base of lenders to directly fund businesses in the regenerative agriculture sector.
- **Founder's experience and track record**
Founder & CEO Dan Miller's experience as Co-Founder, President, and a Director of [Fundrise](#) uniquely positions him as an expert in this niche. His expertise leads Steward to pioneer an otherwise complex and uncertain domain of finance.
- **Network effects**
The Steward platform is a two-sided marketplace, meaning a greater number of engaged borrowers will allow for a greater number of impact lenders, and vice versa. By encouraging borrowers to invite their own communities to participate in their loans, Steward grows its lender network exponentially with each subsequent loan made.
- **Limited capital options for human-scale farmers**
Where large, commodity farms have clear access to capital via agriculture banking schemes and government funding programs, options for businesses operating in the regenerative space are less readily available. Steward specializes in this business type, providing capital as well as a user experience that is much more attractive and accessible than other options.

3. Products & Services

3.1 In-house Technology

Steward addresses its market opportunities by providing a platform to compliantly administer transactions and facilitate the transfer of funds between lenders and borrowers. Our technology integrates with industry-leading payment facilitator [Dwolla](#) to complete thorough user identity verification and transaction management. The Steward platform is built with usability and accessibility in mind, paying attention to the broad and diverse customer base we serve.

Steward's in-house technology is utilized by our customer base to support several financial products outlined below (3.4).

3.2 Specialized Loan Underwriting

Steward thoroughly reviews each qualified borrower who applies to raise funds on the platform, conducting diligence to assess the borrower's business operations, financial position, and agricultural practices. With a breadth of knowledge and direct experience in the farming industry, Steward's in-house due diligence team and its distributed network of consultants provide comprehensive underwriting as well as active support in order to improve the borrower's likelihood of success.

Differentiating itself from a traditional lender, Steward considers factors beyond the purely financial:

- Projected financial performance, in addition to historical data
- Regenerative practices of the business
- Potential community impact created by the borrower's success
- Social factors of the business around diversity, equity, and inclusion

The above components of Steward's diligence process ultimately lead to a substantial increase in the number of borrowers who are both values-aligned and have sound business operations.

3.3 Legal & Regulatory Framework

Steward utilizes various commercial lending exemptions to operate compliantly and to support our core business: the origination of loans to borrowers, and enabling the participation of lenders in such loans. This framework provides the foundation for all of Steward's operations, from how we communicate with our customer base to how we develop our technology.

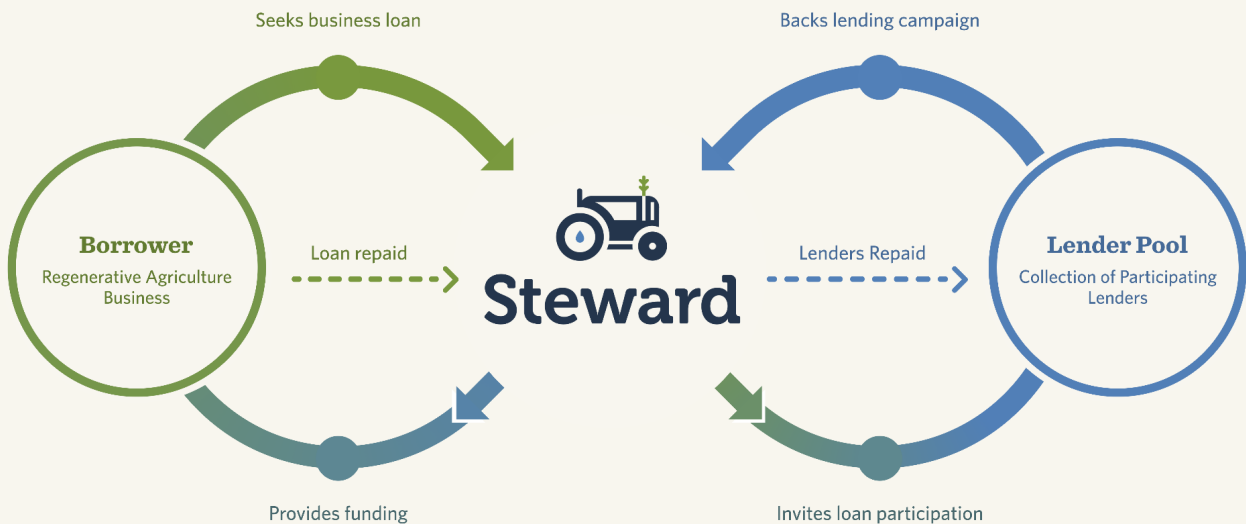
Loan Origination

Steward originates, services, and administers commercial loans, and in the US, private commercial lending, and the financial services industry generally, is regulated at the federal and state levels. Steward's business is structured to comply with those regulations, including by taking advantage of exemptions from registration available to private commercial lenders in most of the states.

Loan Participation

Steward's participated loan product follows the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Reves v. Ernst & Young*, 494 U.S. 56 (1990), which upheld that certain commercial syndicated loans are not securities. This legal analysis was most recently applied in *Kirschner v. JPMorgan Chase, N.A. et al*, No. 1:2017cv06334 - Document 119 (S.D.N.Y. 2020). We have designed our business and our lending programs to comply with the tests and guidance provided by *Reves* and have not registered any of our subsidiaries with the SEC or any other regulator.

3.4 Loan Products



Participated Lending Model

Individual Business Loans

An individual business loan is a long-term commercial loan issued by Steward to a business in the regenerative agriculture sector. Qualified lenders may buy a portion of the underlying loan, a *loan participation*, with repayments made by borrowers over a defined term.

- Flexible loan terms
- Loan amounts range from \$10,000 to \$3,000,000
- Purpose of the loan may be to fund equipment, infrastructure improvements, land acquisition, inventory, working capital

For borrowers, these participated loans present an accessible source of capital, and at a reasonable cost, previously unavailable from traditional sources. The application process is relatively simple, and borrowers are supported throughout by dedicated Steward Account Managers.

For lenders, individual loans offer competitive interest rates with a low barrier to entry and are secured by the borrower's collateral. Most significantly, these deals allow motivated lenders to support businesses aligned with their own values.

Steward Regenerative Capital ("SRC")

SRC is a diversified loan product whereby a short-term, commercial bridge loan is issued by Steward to an individual business. Qualified lenders make loans directly to SRC, which pools capital that can be disbursed to borrowers quickly, and provides the lenders with a fixed-interest, semi-liquid opportunity to fund agricultural businesses.

- Rapid access to funds, generally 3-6 weeks from receipt of loan application
- Purpose of the loan is to fund short-term needs, such as unexpected repairs, purchasing equipment at auction, securing land purchases
- Stricter collateral requirements

For borrowers, short-term bridge loans address the immediate financial needs faced by growers, helping maintain continuous production or pursue time-sensitive activities. Steward may also support the eventual repayment of SRC loans by refinancing the debt with an individual participated loan.

For lenders, SRC offers a diversified product with fixed interest and a shorter commitment of 9 months. It is an evergreen product that offers lenders a seamless way to put money into regenerative agriculture.

4. Customer Acquisition

A challenge of operating a *two-sided marketplace* is developing acquisition strategies for often starkly different customer groups. Steward's approach mixes direct marketing techniques with human-centric, relationship building that builds awareness and engagement over time through multiple touchpoints.

(For marketing material samples, see Appendix, Figure 5)

Borrower Acquisition	Lender Acquisition
<p style="text-align: center;">Marketing strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online search and display ads for relevant borrowing search terms • Print and digital advertising in targeted agricultural media channels • Social media content, balancing industry discussion with direct calls-to-action • Exposure in relevant media and events (e.g. advertorials, podcasts, conferences) • Email newsletter & blog, sharing farmer stories and educating potential borrowers 	<p style="text-align: center;">Marketing strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online search and display ads for relevant lender search terms • Email and social media promotion of available / upcoming lending opportunities • Press coverage to communicate significant business milestones • Weekly newsletter and blog content to build trust with like-minded lenders • Exposure in relevant media and events (e.g. advertorials, podcasts, conferences)
<p style="text-align: center;">Relationship-building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing strategic contacts throughout regenerative agriculture communities (e.g. presentations, attending gatherings, face-to-face at farmers' markets) • Referral program to incentivize network sharing within Steward's community • Strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations (e.g. organic certifiers, regenerative advocacy groups, peer products & services) • Conducting farmer "meet & greet" dinners 	<p style="text-align: center;">Relationship-building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employing a dedicated Lender Relations Manager to foster an engaged lender community • Direct relationship management with values-aligned HNW individuals and family offices • Supporting borrower campaigns to expand their own lender participation (coordinating webinars and producing marketing material)

5. Financial Plan

5.1 Cost Structure

Steward's lean cost structure is vastly comprised of employee-related expenditures, where 90% of our overall costs relate to staffing and only 10% are attributable to technology, marketing, and other administrative expenses. As a fully remote company, Steward avoids many of the substantial fixed costs associated with one or more permanent offices, instead allowing for more flexible and efficient working environments for its distributed team. In addition to its core team of full-time employees, Steward utilizes a network of dedicated contractors to support this emphasis on both growth and flexibility, and in an economically reasonable manner.

5.2 Revenue Structure

Steward's primary source of revenue generation comes from loan origination fees, driven by the number of borrowers supported and the amount of capital raised on the Steward platform. Associated with the issuing of a loan, Steward currently charges to the borrower an origination fee of 3% on individual participated loans and 2% on short-term bridge loans issued by SRC. Steward also realizes secondary sources of revenue, for example fees charged for ad hoc consulting as well as business support services.

5.3 Profitability Analysis

Steward intends to prove the economic viability of our model by achieving profitability within 5 years. As a fully remote company with nominal overhead costs, our goal is to minimize cost creep while doubling revenue year-over-year as our processes improve. We will introduce an additional revenue stream in the form of a loan management fee, at 1% on each lender transaction. This additional revenue will be active in the second half of 2023.

The below table outlines Steward's annual loan origination targets, projected revenue and expenses, through 2026. It does not, however, account for the addition of new revenue streams during this period (more in *6.1 Anticipated Revenue Opportunities*).

Year	Loan Volume	Origination Revenue	Management Revenue	Expenses	Gross Profit
2022	\$14,000,000	\$315,000	\$0	\$2,253,625	-\$1,938,625
2023	\$28,000,000	\$630,000	\$160,000	\$2,487,580	-\$1,697,580
2024	\$48,000,000	\$1,080,000	\$480,000	\$2,745,823	-\$1,185,823
2025	\$72,000,000	\$1,620,000	\$720,000	\$3,030,874	-\$690,874
2026	\$96,000,000	\$2,160,000	\$960,000	\$3,345,518	-\$225,518

Steward 5 Year Revenue Projections (Full projection in Appendix, Figure 6.)

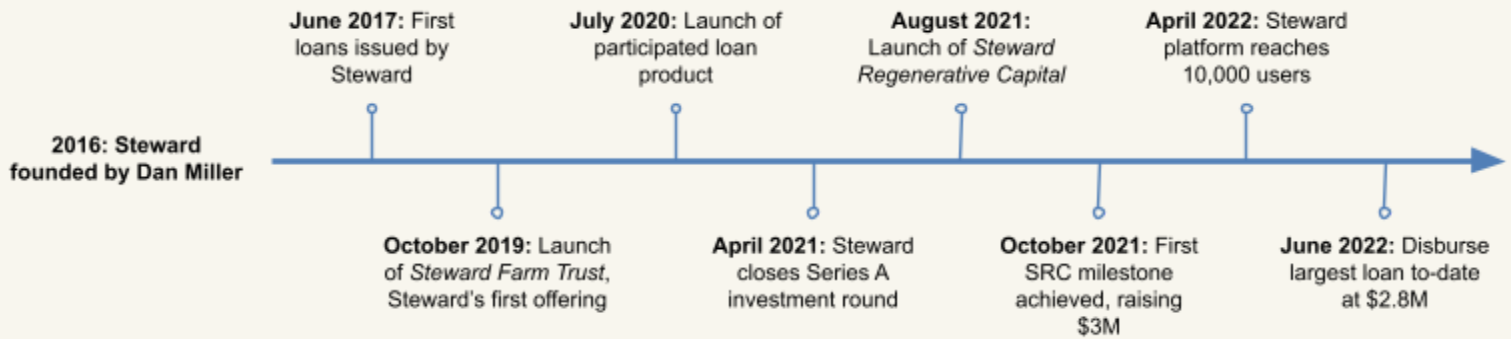
Operating expenses for 2022 are approximately \$180,000 per month, and are projected to rise to \$290,000 per month by the end of 2026. Targeting an average loan origination fee of 2.25% across all

products, with the added 1% management fee, we aim to achieve profitability by the end of 2026, originating \$27 million per quarter.

The forward-looking statements and projections in this business plan are based upon our current expectations, plans, estimates, assumptions and beliefs and involve numerous risks and uncertainties. Our assumptions involve judgments with respect to, among other things, future economic, competitive and market conditions and future business decisions, all of which are difficult or impossible to predict accurately and many of which are beyond our control. Although we believe that our expectations reflected in our forward-looking statements and projections are based on reasonable assumptions, our actual results and performance could differ materially from what we included in this business plan.

6. Looking Forward

With a target to achieve profitability by the end of 2026, Steward aims to reach this accomplishment a decade after the initial founding of the company.



6.1 Anticipated Revenue Opportunities

- **Loan servicing**

To date, lenders have been able to participate in Steward loans and incur no management or servicing fees. Early market signals demonstrate that demand for Steward's lending opportunities is substantial, and that introducing an additional fee would not significantly reduce this demand. Lender fees could directly fund the costs incurred by Steward in our loan servicing efforts, effectively providing support to borrowers to ensure they maintain regular repayments, all to the ultimate benefit of those lenders.

- **Grant writing**

Steward employs grant writing specialists to help businesses navigate complex applications and access low-cost capital. Steward realizes revenue through a similar fee structure to our loan origination, charging a percentage on successfully funded grant applications.

As of 2021, Steward has conducted pilot grant writing services with great success, having secured over \$1,000,000 in USDA grant funding for regenerative agriculture businesses.

- **Advisory services**

In order for businesses to be effective in their servicing of Steward loans, we offer additional consulting services to support their growth. These ad hoc services can be billed at an hourly rate as needed.

- **Service partnerships**

Steward has established a partnership with farmer-focused eCommerce platform, [Local Line](#), to build websites for Steward borrowers. This relationship includes a 15% revenue share agreement for referred customers, and we anticipate similar arrangements with other specialized service providers to arise in the future.

- **Equity offerings**

Steward ultimately seeks to expand our capital solutions beyond debt and to become a holistic financial partner for agricultural businesses. We have identified specific securities exemptions that allow appropriate businesses to compliantly raise equity capital on the Steward platform in an accessible manner, and we have piloted this offering with two of Steward's premier agriculture business partners.

6.2 Measuring Steward's Impact

Steward's mission is to promote economic and environmental stewardship through regenerative agriculture. We ultimately strive to improve visibility and understanding of the impacts of such a mission, as well as its reach. In order to achieve this, we seek to enhance both our social and environmental impact measurements, and to expand our capacities geographically.

- **Environmental impact measurements**

Measure and verify the actual environmental impacts of farms and businesses that Steward funds. We will develop tools and technologies, partnering with external experts, to add crucial data to our funding narratives. The benefit of acknowledging environmental impacts is vast: beyond confirming the tangible positive effects regenerative businesses have on the environment, this data will add a new element of credibility to Steward's operations--validating our business in the eyes of larger investors, institutional capital and even policymakers.

- **Social impact measurements**

Identifying important metrics. Explicitly directing efforts towards businesses that have been traditionally overlooked or underserved by capital in the industry.

- **Geographical impact**

Whilst our business activity is currently focussed in the US, we seek to expand our reach and provide the same level of support to regenerative agriculture businesses globally. We expect our initial target markets to be Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom, given the cultural, linguistic, and economic connections.

Appendix

Figure 1: [Steward's Regenerative Framework](#)

Figure 2: [Steward Organization Chart, June 2022](#)

Figure 3: **Notable Press Coverage**

1. [EatingWell: This Company Has Raised Over \\$4 Million For Small Farms – Here's How.](#)
2. [Forbes: Small Sustainable Farms Need To Pivot To Direct-To-Consumer Sales. This Platform Aims To Help.](#)
3. [FastCompany: Small farms are struggling—now there's a crowdfunding platform for that.](#)
4. [Fortune: Why Walmart's quest to be a regenerative farming pioneer is falling short.](#)

Figure 4: **Customer Case Studies**

1. Borrower: [Duriel Harris, Harris Cattle Co.](#)
2. Lender: [Libby Searles-Bohs & Hally Bohs](#)

Figure 5: **Marketing One-pagers**

1. [Steward Loan Overview \(Borrower-focussed\)](#)
2. [Steward Loan Overview \(Lender-focussed\)](#)
3. [Steward Regenerative Capital Overview](#)

Figure 6: [Quarterly Revenue and Expense Projections, 2022-2026](#)