

LGBT Impact Travel:

Models for Connecting Potential Donors to LGBT Communities in the Global South



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The logo for MOSSIER, featuring a stylized 'M' composed of colorful geometric shapes (green, yellow, red, blue) followed by the word 'MOSSIER' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.


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Executive Summary

As international and community-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) face reductions in funding for LGBT and other human rights issues, they are seeking alternative funding sources to continue providing necessary social services and advocacy. Many of these organizations are ill-equipped to develop new donor relationships, and finding a sustainable and suitable form of funding requires a critical and iterative process. This report details one such process, highlighting Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center, a Minnesota-based non-profit organization that is focused on increasing funding streams for organizations in the Global South that provide advocacy and support to LGBT communities and entrepreneurs. With Mossier, our Capstone Team developed four distinct models to connect potential LGBT identifying and ally donors to nonprofits around the world. In the report, we present these models examined through a Developmental Evaluation framework¹, which allowed our team to provide the insights necessary to rapidly adapt the project based on feedback from relevant stakeholders.

In many ways, these models prove to be mileposts in the developmental process of finding a viable solution to alternative sources of funding. These models arose from a constant stream of information that precipitated both small and large shifts to the project. Due to this adaptive nature, the boundaries that define where one model ends and another begins are hazy. Regardless, each iteration of the model clearly represents a significant change necessitated by the information our team received from stakeholders.

The final model presented in this paper, Destination Equality, an online travel platform connecting U.S. based LGBT travelers with nonprofit organizations around the world, is a culmination of the insights, critiques, concerns, and questions that our team grappled with during this process. We acknowledge that the developmental process has not yet ended, but we believe that in its current form, Destination Equality will provide a foundation for a successful platform that connects LGBT identifying donors with organizations that fight for LGBT rights via authentic travel experiences. As they move forward with this platform, we recommend that Mossier:

- Develop key partnerships with established travel platforms to reach a wider market of travelers;
- Conduct further market research to cater to potential LGBT identifying and ally donors;
- Build local capacity of organizations to implement a travel based fundraising strategy; and
- Maintain healthy, transparent relationships with partner organizations, including a balance between brand recognition and organizational autonomy.

¹ A type of evaluation that occurs simultaneously with program development, offering feedback at the earliest stages of program formation to create a solid foundation upon which other evaluations may be layered.

Introduction

Funding is an ever-present issue for international and local organizations. With the expectation that U.S. funding for global LGBT advocacy and HIV reduction will decline, these organizations are desperate to find alternative funding sources so they can continue running their programs and providing much-needed services (Kates et al., 2018). While the Fiscal Year 2018 funding bill has maintained foreign expenditures at a relatively stable rate, the funding cuts requested by the White House have been with the explicit “expectation that other donors can and should increase their commitments to these causes” (Jaffe, 2018, p.1).

While it is understood that funding increases notably impact services that nonprofits offer in positive ways, the effects of immediate donor withdrawal are less researched. Funding withdrawal is often associated with the development of innovative solutions, but many organizations are forced to limit or drastically change their operations or face closure. In attempting to expand their services and engage new donors, these nonprofits face a variety of challenges. Often these organizations have limited relationships with donor networks, as large government contracts “crowd out” other sources of funding (Pallas & Nguyen, 2017). This crowding out effect can leave organizations without the necessary connections or competencies to fill these funding gaps should donors suddenly withdraw their support.

Clearly, strategies aimed at diversifying funding sources are crucial to the survival of these organizations. Engaging in diversified, targeted donor campaigns can be difficult, especially for organizations with few staff, limited resources, and no connections to donor networks. Effective donor engagement also requires significant capacity and skill that are often lacking in organizations that have been funded through governmental institutions. Finding a donor group that shares common fundamental values rather than soliciting to a wider group of people can be helpful for these organizations as they build relationships those that share their values (Bennett, 2003). A targeted approach to donor outreach also allows for organizations to make appeals that more directly relate to donors (Schlegelmilch, Love, & Diamantopoulos, 1997). The language embedded within these appeals will also directly affect the likelihood of donation, and organizations should stress the need for funds, the efficiency of their donation, and the individual impact of the donor (Chuang & Chan, 2000).

The decisions that organizations will have to make when aiming to fill future funding gaps are critical and varied. It is likely that many of these organizations are not well equipped to make these decisions and develop a funding stream that is stable, contextually relevant, and implementable. This report details an iterative process for developing one such stream of funding, specifically for LGBTQIAA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans,

queer, intersex, asexual, and ally; hereafter shortened to LGBT) focused nonprofit organizations operating in the Global South.

The Client: Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center

Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center (Mossier) is a Minnesota based non-profit organization that provides technical assistance and financial support to LGBT entrepreneurs and health service organizations in the Global South. The organization is named after Kevin J. Mossier, a Minnesota-based LGBTQ activist and entrepreneur who started the first openly gay travel business called ‘RSVP Vacations’ in 1985. Kevin “frequently exercised his influence as a prominent business leader in the Twin Cities by working with local politicians to advance conversations about equity for marginalized populations.” (Mossier Capstone Proposal, 2017). Charlie Rounds, a longtime friend of Kevin’s and past president of RSVP Vacations, wanted to continue this legacy after Kevin passed away, and thus, with current Executive Director Nick Alm, created the Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center in 2016.

Mossier addresses intergenerational issues in the LGBT community by “invest[ing] in LGBT entrepreneurs across borders and generations.” (Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center, 2017) With its strong connection to the travel industry, Mossier has been working on various initiatives to connect LGBT travelers in the U.S. with LGBT communities across the globe to better engage with donors who want a more authentic and community-focused experience while traveling.



Figure 1: Travel Experiences as a Connector between Donors and Nonprofits

One such initiative, a partnership with a local organization in the Dominican Republic, served as the starting point for this Capstone Project.

Their Partner: ProActividad

ProActividad is an LGBT focused sexual health and economic development non-profit organization based in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. For the past three years, ProActividad and Mossier have been working on building the employment capacity of young Dominican LGBT individuals through training in the hospitality and travel industry, and developing a model for generating sustainable revenue to continue these activities. As the next phase of their partnership, ProActividad and Mossier aim to establish a social enterprise tourism operator as a direct revenue stream for their sexual health and training services. This tourism operator, called A2Z



Travel & Tours, would additionally hire and provide ongoing hospitality training for local LGBT youth.

Project Overview: Harnessing the Power of Travel

As ProActividad prepared to launch A2Z Travel & Tours, Mossier enlisted the help of our Capstone team (four graduate students studying international development and human rights) to provide consultation in strategic planning and technical assistance.

Mossier submitted an initial project proposal in August 2017 (see Appendix E) that described what was to be our work with ProActividad and A2Z Travel & Tours. Based on this proposal, the Capstone Team drafted an initial scope of work in December 2017. To establish the context of their work, the Capstone Team would travel to Santo Domingo early January 2018 to assist ProActividad with the initial development of A2Z Travel & Tours. Once there and throughout the rest of the semester, the team would facilitate strategic planning for A2Z Travel & Tours with ProActividad and Mossier, conduct market research, and propose recommendations to Mossier regarding their continued partnership with ProActividad on this initiative.

The underlying initiative and, consequently, the scope of the Capstone Team's work, transformed dramatically over the course of six months in direct response to data collected on-the-ground and shared with stakeholders, and through collaborative decision making with the client.

Methodology

To illustrate the processes employed by our Capstone team as we provided consultation and strategic planning for both ProActividad and Mossier, this section will describe the framework and application of Developmental Evaluation, a relational and process-focused approach to emergent program evaluation. This section begins with a review of Developmental Evaluation, pertaining specifically to its focus on emergent program development and its application to organizational learning. We selected this approach to analyze the transformational shifts that occurred over the course of this Capstone Project as adaptive responses to real-time data collected on-the-ground and shared with stakeholders, and to articulate a vision for the project's future. The section concludes with an explanation of the methodology constructed upon this framework as it is to be applied to an analysis of the project's evolution.

Developmental Evaluation

Developmental Evaluation emerged as an approach out of a growing awareness of the limitations of traditional evaluative approaches. Lawrence et al. (2018) argue that although requests for proposals “usually require both a logic model and an evaluation,” programs that are in development may not be ready for “traditional summative or formative evaluation.” These kinds of evaluations typically call for linear models and value-laden assessments of a program's fulfillment of prescribed outcomes. Emergent programs, or programs in the early phases of development, may yet be formulating goals and the models to achieve these goals. As a result, traditional evaluations may miss their “potential to inform and improve [these] programs.”

Developmental Evaluation fills this gap for emergent programs by complementing traditional approaches to evaluation as a “preformative evaluation approach” (Fagen et al., 2011, p.646). Developmental evaluation is preformative in that it occurs simultaneously with program development, offering feedback at the earliest stages of program formation to create a solid foundation upon which other evaluations may be layered. As emergent programs undergo frequent changes while learning to navigate the landscapes in which they intend to operate, developmental evaluation “accommodates” and guides those changes to support innovation and organizational learning (Shea & Taylor, 2017).

Proffered by Michael Quinn Patton (1994), developmental evaluation is not necessarily an evaluative model, but rather a long-term partnership with clients engaged in ongoing program development. Developmental evaluators become part of the program team, informing discussions by providing real-time data and facilitating collaborative analysis and decision-making regarding program development (Lawrence et al., 2018). Patton (1994) emphasizes the rapid nature of Developmental Evaluation's responsiveness to data,

claiming of developmental evaluators: “no sooner do they articulate and clarify some aspect of the process than that very awareness becomes an intervention and acts to change what they do” (p.313).

Developmental Evaluation values both innovation and learning, requiring fluid program timelines with significant time and effort devoted to evaluative activities in collaboration with evaluators (Patton, 1994; Lawrence et al. 2018). Key activities in Developmental Evaluations include understanding the stakeholder and program environment, collecting data on emergent programs from multiple stakeholder viewpoints, sharing and collectively analyzing data with program developers, and facilitating decision-making on data-driven program adaptations (Patton, 1994; Lawrence et al., 2018; Fagen et al. 2011; Shea & Taylor, 2017).

Recognizing the complexity of emergent program environments, Developmental Evaluation does not cease with this decision, but through long-term partnership with program developers, the cycle of real-time, rapid response to feedback is ongoing.

Just as adaptive response is ongoing in Developmental Evaluation, so too is the organizational learning resulting from the process. Shea and Taylor (2017) argue that developmental evaluation provides a system for organizational learning by supporting “systematic reflection,” a critically important task for emergent programs. While emergent programs may be challenged by uncertainty within and surrounding their program environment, developmental evaluation provides a “flexible evaluation design that relies on various data collection techniques” to gather data and decipher its meaning (ibid.). Developmental Evaluation contributes to organizational learning by building reflective and analytical capacities for improved decision-making processes.

In their *Practitioner’s Guide to Developmental Evaluation*, Dozois, Blanchet-Cohen, and Langlois (2010) recommend four major practices associated with Developmental Evaluation: orienting, watching, sense-making, and intervening. Through orienting, developmental evaluators help organizations to understand the reality and complexity of the situation at hand by challenging assumptions and enriching knowledge via research. Developmental evaluators also conduct ongoing observation, watching activities and relationships as the program develops to further organizational learning about its own processes. Upon collecting data via research and observation, developmental evaluators make meaning through collaborative interpretation and data analysis. Finally, developmental evaluators intervene to influence the development of the program based on the analysis of their data.

“Developmental evaluators help stakeholders to frame and define key elements of the initiative and test their models for accuracy and comprehensiveness. In doing so, they support the group in orienting itself to the broader context and in understanding their roles and responsibilities within it.” (Dozois et. al, 2010)

Why Developmental Evaluation?

Throughout the LGBT Impact Tourism project, we incorporated key principles of Developmental Evaluation into our partnership with Mossier, contributing to the adaptive response and transformation of the project over time, as well as the organizational learning of our client.

Our Capstone project with Mossier presented an ideal scenario to deploy a Developmental Evaluation approach because of its relational and emergent qualities. Mossier and the Humphrey School of Public Affairs have collaborated on various projects before; this project furthering the relationship between these two entities. Additionally, as the LGBT Impact Tourism project is, indeed, in an emergent or developmental phase, Developmental Evaluation is an effective approach to encourage iterative program design and organizational learning.

In the sections that follow, we will trace the evolution of this Capstone Project through a Developmental Evaluation framework. We will describe the characteristics of this emergent program, which began as a social enterprise tourism operator based in the Dominican Republic and now seeks to be an online platform connecting U.S. based LGBT travelers with LGBT organizations worldwide to promote individual giving. For each of the models articulated below, we will identify the underlying theory of change as well as the model's proposed implementation strategy and relevant stakeholders. We will chronicle the data collection processes and highlight the key analyses and information sharing that led to adaptive responses utilizing the four practices outlined by Dozois, Blanchet-Cohen, and Langlois (2010).

Although our collaboration with Mossier has been brief, the adaptations to the project have been numerous and significant. Through our analysis of the project's evolution, we intend to demonstrate the value of data-driven adaptation and the Developmental Evaluation approach for program development and organizational learning.

Analysis of Impact Tourism Models

Model 1: A2Z Travel & Tours- the Four Package Approach

Model Description

The original form this project took is depicted in Model 1, where the theory of change was to ensure financial sustainability of ProActividad by creating a for-profit, social enterprise tourism operator called A2Z Travel & Tours (A2Z). At this stage, Mossier served as a partner to ProActividad, supporting their services and helping them develop A2Z. ProActividad sought to generate revenue by creating four separate tourism packages and making them available for LGBT and ally travelers from the U.S. These packages included softball group trips, LGBT weddings, a “sun and sand” long weekend, and trips revolving around various LGBT-focused events in the Dominican Republic. ProActividad would use the profit generated from travelers booking these different packages to support its services to the LGBT community in the Dominican Republic.

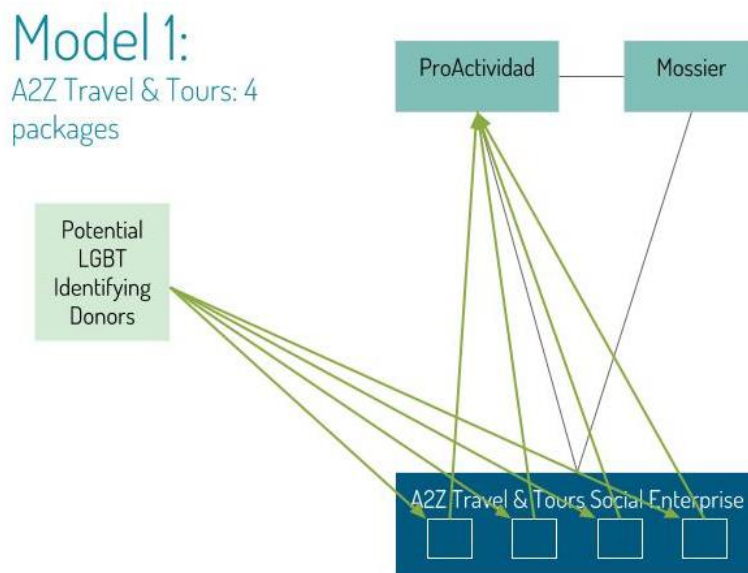


Figure 2: Model 1 - A2Z Travel & Tours as the Social Enterprise Initiative of ProActividad, 4 Packages

Assumptions

The foundational assumption for this first model was that financial independence (gained by generating profit from A2Z) leads to the sustainability of ProActividad’s social programs, which both improve health outcomes for LGBT youth in the Dominican Republic and foster their economic development through job training and placement. The stakeholders involved at this stage were ProActividad (and A2Z Travel & Tours),

Caribbean Vulnerable Communities (CVC) - the larger organization that houses ProActividad, Mossier, and LGBT travelers from the U.S.

This model involved many assumptions that needed to be tested to ensure the successful implementation of A2Z Travel & Tours. One such assumption was that LGBT youth lack employment opportunities in the Dominican Republic and are interested in working in the hospitality industry. This served as the basis for

**Proposed Tour Packages Offered
by A2Z Travel & Tours**

- *Softball Spring Training*
-A week-long spring training offered to LGBT softball teams from the U.S.
- *Sun & Sand Long Weekend*
-A long weekend in Las Terrenas featuring nightly parties and excursion opportunities
- *Special Events*
-Hosted private events such as weddings, bachelor(ette) parties, etc.
- *Dominican Republic Events*
-Special country-wide events and festivities including Pride, Jazz Fest, etc.

ProActividad and Mossier's training of LGBT youth and connecting them to jobs in the hospitality industry. Another assumption was that group tours with LGBT travelers from the U.S. are a sustainable source of income and that these types of travelers will continue to travel to Santo Domingo. These travelers were the initial target market for A2Z Travel & Tours and as such, they constituted an integral component of the model overall. A third assumption was that U.S. and Dominican Republic international relations would be stable enough to allow for continued tourism; in other words, American-DR tourism would not be limited due to political constraints. Finally, the last assumption was that we (the Capstone Team) would help establish relationships with tourist groups and other U.S.-based stakeholders, and that these relationships would continue to exist once the capstone project has finished.

Developmental Evaluation Activities

1. Orienting

At the beginning of this project, Mossier requested that we travel to the Dominican Republic to meet with ProActividad and their stakeholders so that we could assess the current state of A2Z Travel and Tours and determine where Mossier could provide assistance. We helped ProActividad think through the goals and ideal direction of A2Z, their current priorities, key assets, and potential weaknesses.

2. Watching and Sense-making

Our team spent approximately two weeks in the Dominican Republic observing Model 1 in action. We traveled to potential event sites such as Las Terrenas (location of beach weekend) and softball fields to see them firsthand and to record our observations through notes and pictures. It was during this time that we began to see the limitations of this model (described below) and to form recommendations.

3. Intervening

One of the primary ways in which our group “intervened” in this process was by asking questions. The questions we asked were meant to both assist in our understanding and to help ProActividad make explicit their assumptions and limitations.

Limitations

Throughout the stages of orienting, watching, sense-making, and intervening, we noticed multiple limitations that had the potential to hinder the successful implementation of A2Z as a tool for financial sustainability.

First, ProActividad severely lacked the staff capacity to run A2Z as envisioned- starting off with four tour packages. We found that the social enterprise was to be led by one ProActividad staff member who already held other roles and responsibilities at ProActividad. Other staff and volunteers would help her as needed. This process as we saw it was not adequate for booking and running four distinct tour packages for groups of U.S.-based travelers.

Second, we observed that many of the volunteers ProActividad would employ to run these tours and events were not fluent in English. Since the target recipients of A2Z’s packages were mostly only English-speaking, this would serve as a barrier for them, particularly when discussing wedding venues/catering.

Finally, we observed that A2Z had a limited to no start-up capital with which to invest in needed assets, such as a user-friendly website that accepts payments and reservations, nice photography, additional staff, etc. This, we concluded, would hinder a proper launch of A2Z Travel and Tours.

CRITICAL FAILURE

- ❖ Too many tour package options and not enough staff, infrastructure, or working capital to run them successfully while meeting tourists’ expectations.

Model 2: A2Z Travel & Tours- the One Package Approach

Model Description

Rather than straining resources on four tour packages, our team suggested that A2Z focus on just one tour package to launch the social enterprise in Model 2. As it did in Model 1, ProActividad would get funding from LGBT travelers booking the package. We recommended that they choose the softball spring training package as the pilot since it was the most developed of the four packages. Furthermore, it would be available for booking months in advance, providing A2Z with much needed income to get things in place before the guests arrived.

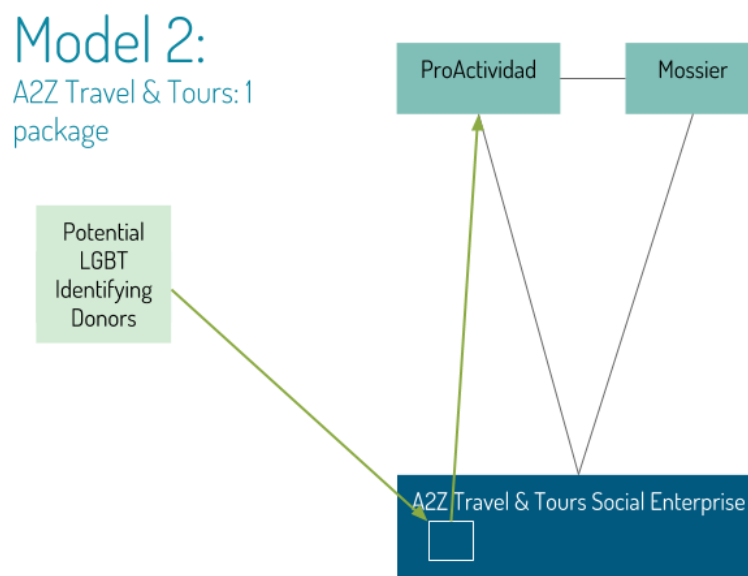


Figure 3: Model 2 - A2Z Travel & Tours as the Social Enterprise Initiative of ProActividad, 1 Package

Assumptions

By focusing only on the launch of the softball package and its smooth running, A2Z could ensure it has streamlined operations to foster revenue generation. Once sufficient revenue is generated, A2Z could start diverting its resources to develop the other tour packages. The primary stakeholders involved at this stage were ProActividad, A2Z Travel & Tours, CVC, Mossier, and LGBT travelers (softball teams, exclusively).

Developmental Evaluation Activities

1. Orienting

With the shift to Model 2 as our guide, we re-oriented ourselves and worked with ProActividad and Mossier

to set new priorities and goals for the project.

2. Watching and Sense-making

Our team then began conducting market research on the types of people that attend these softball trips, opportunities to promote A2Z at sporting events and tournaments, and possible partnerships with the Minnesota Twins Major League Baseball team and other Minnesota-based Fortune 500 companies.

3. Intervening

As in Model 1, our primary intervening consisted of asking tough questions to explore assumptions and boundaries, as well as facilitating discussions and “pausing” the conversation when new ideas started to get the group off-track.

Limitations

Further research and observations led us to realize there were still significant limitations that would prevent the successful implementation of this second model. One such limitation was the lack of infrastructure at the softball fields and proposed hotels where the softball teams would be staying (including lack of restrooms at the fields and long distance from the hotels).



Image 1: Softball Field Proposed for Spring Training Package

CRITICAL FAILURE

- ❖ A2Z Travel and Tours still lacked the start-up capital, infrastructure, and staff even for this significantly reduced tourism business model.
-

Model 3: Destination Equality, Harnessing the Power of Corporate and Independent Travel

Model Description

After we proposed Model 2 to Mossier, Charlie Rounds (Mossier co-founder) traveled to the Dominican Republic to meet with ProActividad and other stakeholders and saw for himself the limitations we described.

The idea for Destination Equality (DE) arose from our Charlie's decades of experience in the travel industry, noting that traditional travel experiences often omit opportunities for interaction between travelers and destination communities. After observing ProActividad's capacity limitations to implement a successful tourism operator, he concluded that Mossier could better support a local organization and fill the need to improve the experience of travelers by providing a service that connects travelers to local organizations.

Thus, Model 3 represents a radical shift in this project's underlying theory of change. Instead of relying on a social enterprise arm for financial stability, Model 3 introduced an independent online platform called Destination Equality that would generate revenue by serving as a portal for connecting travelers to local LGBT organizations. In this model, ProActividad moves from a position of partner to that of a beneficiary within Destination Equality. It becomes one of several LGBT focused nonprofits around the world for which Mossier seeks to supplement funding by connecting them with potential donors via hosted travel experiences.

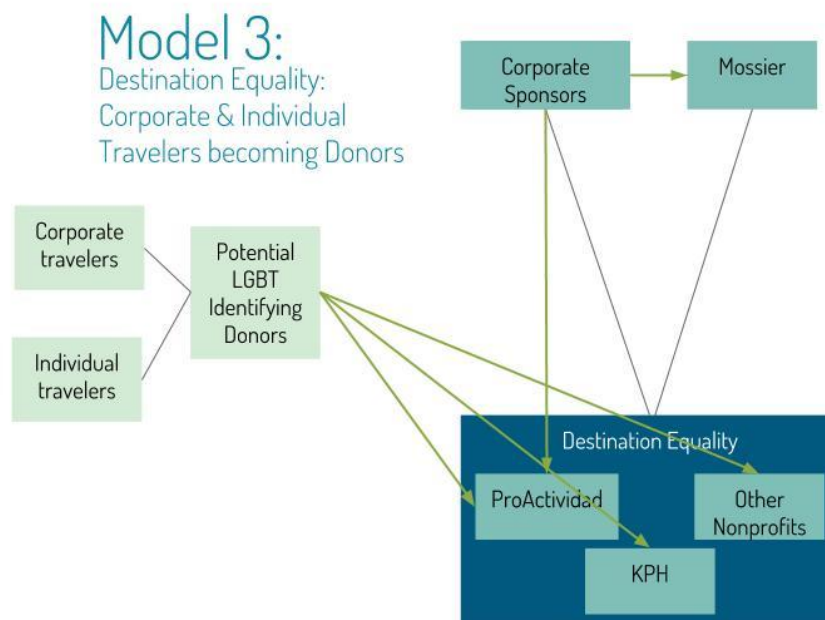


Figure 4: Model 3 - Destination Equality: Connecting Potential Donors to LGBT Nonprofits Via an Online Platform

Assumptions

As shown in Figure 4, Destination Equality entails four groups of stakeholders: Mossier, corporate sponsors, local LGBT organizations, and potential LGBT identifying donors comprised of corporate and individual travelers. Mossier would be responsible for setting up the online platform; conducting aggressive outreach and networking to recruit corporate sponsors, such as Delta Airlines, to support DE as partners. These corporate sponsors would pay a sponsorship fee and in return, be featured as LGBT-friendly travel and hospitality providers on the site. Mossier would also identify and work with local LGBT organizations in select locations to feature them on the site as avenues that offer travelers a more authentic travel experience and that provide opportunities to learn more about the lived and legal experience of local LGBT people. The audience for the site would be inclusive of both corporate and individual travelers, with particular focus on attracting corporate travelers as a target market. As travelers use the platform to sign up for experiences, they serve as donors providing funding to directly support the local NGOs. In addition to corporate sponsorships, therefore, this Model generates revenue by booking travel experiences that allow travelers to engage with and learn from local organizations. An added value associated with this model is the potential for the development of long term relationships which could lead to travelers providing continued financial support to the organizations with whom they book experiences as a result of their newly established personal connections.

Developmental Evaluation Activities

1. Orienting, Watching, and Sense-making

Model 3 introduced a drastic shift in the project's underlying theory of change. As a result, our team reflected on ways to be of best use to the project, ultimately deciding on recruiting opinions from industry experts. This, we agreed, would provide us with an opportunity to better understand not just corporate travel but also learn about what resources are needed to make Destination Equality a reality.

2. Intervening

We pitched Model 3 to a focus group of Fortune 500 Diversity & Inclusion professionals and leaders in the travel industry seeking their feedback on the platform's viability. Furthermore, we conducted follow up interviews with willing participants from the focus group. The data gathered from the focus group, follow-up interviews, and further research highlighted the shortcomings associated with Model 3.



Image 2: Mossier and the Humphrey Capstone Team at the Focus Group

Limitations

The focus group reached a general consensus that an independent online platform would face a lot of difficulty in attracting and retaining users. If the goal of Destination Equality is to make it easier for travelers to connect with destination communities, the site would first need to be able to connect to the travelers themselves. Being a new addition to the market of travel sites would not be conducive to this aim. Unless Mossier was exceptional in its networking and marketing, it would be very difficult for this new product in the market to generate the attention it needed to run successfully. Additionally, many of the focus group participants noted that corporate travelers are an unsuitable target market for DE. Given their restricted business schedule and heightened need for security, corporate travelers lack room in their travel for external experience that DE would offer.

CRITICAL FAILURE

- ❖ Destination Equality would struggle to stand out in a world heavily saturated with popular travel sites. Additionally, its target market of corporate travelers is unfit for what DE is hoping to accomplish.
-

Model 4: Destination Equality- Becoming the Brand of LGBT Impact Travel

Model Description

Taking the viewpoints from the focus group participants into consideration, we refined the project to take the form of Model 4. In this model, Destination Equality transforms from an independent online platform to a travel experience provider hosted on established search platforms, such as Airbnb or TripAdvisor. Additionally, corporate travelers no longer serve as the primary target market given the additional restrictions associated with their travel.

By featuring DE on other established websites, we tap into already well-established markets and increase the chances of attracting higher numbers of sustainable users. Mossier would no longer have to dedicate its resources to market DE. Rather, it could now focus on refining the services offered by DE. As travelers utilize established travel search platforms and select Destination Equality to inform their travel experience, they are connected to the featured local NGOs. When they sign up for the opportunities made available by the organizations, they act as donors that fund the organizations' services directly. As in Model 3, Model 4 continues the additional funding model through corporate sponsors and also hopes to foster an ongoing philanthropy.

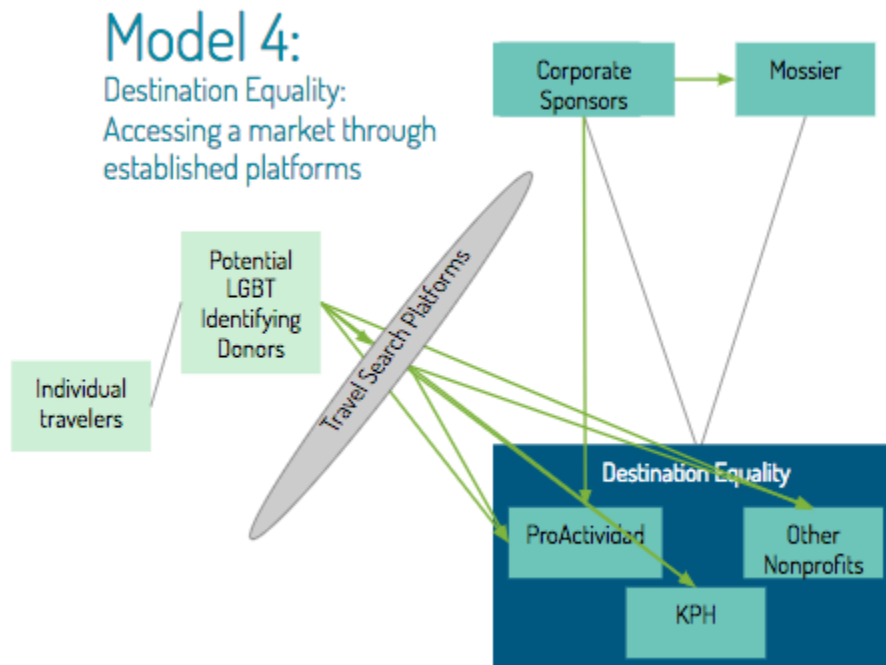


Figure 5: Model 4 - Destination Equality: Branding LGBT Impact Travel on Established Travel Platforms

Assumptions

Model 4 is based on the assumption that ethical or socially conscious travel is growing more popular. Many travelers are now looking for ways to engage more directly with the communities in the destinations they visit. Therefore, an option such as Destination Equality would address this growing trend of social impact travel if included on a high traffic website.

Developmental Evaluation Activities

1. Orienting, Watching, Sense-making, and Intervening

The Developmental Evaluation activities undertaken for Model 3 inform Model 4. As noted already, we intervened by using the feedback we received from the focus group participants to amend Model 3 into Model 4.

Limitations

Model 4 presents the final iteration of the project thus far. Given the time limitations of the project, the team has not had the opportunity to fully assess the limitations associated with Model 4, however, the following section describes recommendations for Mossier's future work with this model.

Recommendations

There are considerable challenges in developing a stream of funding for international organizations that is not only sustainable, but also replicable and stable. With the growing concerns of instability of governmental aid to the Global South, these challenges grow ever more pertinent. The models described in this report address many of these challenges and serve to illustrate the importance of considering both local capacity and donor perceptions when trying to fill these funding gaps. Given these considerations, we provide five recommendations for Mossier to guide Destination Equality towards a secure and sustainable future.

Develop Important Partnerships

The stakeholders who attended the focus group hosted by Mossier consistently emphasized the importance of utilizing existing platforms to help bring Destination Equality to scale. Many of the challenges that threaten Destination Equality's viability surround both the costs of developing a platform to connect travelers to nonprofits, and the difficulties in gaining a substantial user base for the platform. Airbnb, an online marketplace that allows users to sell hospitality related services including experiences, already has 4 million listings in 191 countries across the globe ("Fast Facts", 2017). Clearly utilizing existing platforms such as Airbnb would allow Destination Equality to both establish a trusted payment model and connect with a large user base, without losing autonomy over the experiences offered.

The initial push to partner with corporate travel groups was made in part because of the inherent benefits of establishing a large user base through key partnerships. While corporate travelers have restrictions that make the utilization of Destination Equality suboptimal, partnering with LGBT resources groups within for-profit companies, could still prove beneficial to the platform's growth. Destination Equality should explore these possible relationships and determine what these resource groups would deem essential in order to explicitly advocate for these experiences to their employees.

While partnerships with other organizations including Gaytravel.com and AirBnB can provide substantial benefits to Destination Equality in the short and long term, it is important for DE to establish its own organizational image to avoid being supplanted by these partnerships. As the platform moves forward, Mossier should weigh the additional advantages that these connections can have against the independence that could be lost from the partnerships.

Mind the Gaps

The issue of funding is ever present in international development and finding stable and robust forms of support remains an issue. This concern is exacerbated by the crowding out effects that occur when

organizations are funded by large financial grants (Pallas and Nguyen, 2017). It is important to consider this when developing new and diversified funding streams, as these organizations likely lack the social connections and core competencies needed to engage in wide-ranging and specific donor engagement strategies.

Several of the initial models that this Capstone team engaged with proved to be flawed due to an organizational lack of staffing, competencies, or connections necessary to successfully engage donors and travelers. The initial models described in this report assumed that ProActividad would have the ability to run a for-profit tourism enterprise that would both attract and engage clients from the United States. This challenge is analogous to the situation of organizations that have been funded by large grants, whose stability is challenged by an inability to engage in other funding streams.

In the attempts to find a scalable and replicable model for connecting individual donors to NGOs and nonprofits, it is important to consider these individual challenges. The success of a model depends on its logical underpinnings and connections, but perhaps more importantly, on its ease of implementation. While we would argue that the Destination Equality model is effective for connecting donors with nonprofits associated with Mossier, it is important to modify the model so that it can be implemented adequately within local contexts.

Further Market Research

Significant time and effort should be invested in furthering Mossier's understanding of social impact travel before DE is launched. Destination Equality has a nuanced conceptualization of their target market and focusing on travelers that share common values with the nonprofits hosted on the platform should prove essential. However, developing a more general understanding of the prices related to the social impact travel industry will be crucial for the platform's success in the future.

The nonprofits that will be featured on the Destination Equality platform will have to make important decisions regarding the price points associated with the experiences they offer. Determining these price points will be difficult and will likely depend on whether they are hoping to maximize contributions during the experience or to instead reach a broader audience for future donations. Regardless, it is important to operate at a price point that donors will be willing to contribute to. While it will be the decision of the nonprofit organizations in-country to determine what experiences they choose to offer, Mossier can help provide data and resources to help determine a competitive price for those experiences.

Some important considerations should be made when conducting this research. The clear advantage to offering an experience at the lowest profitable price possible is that the quantity of travelers willing to purchase these experiences will be higher. While a higher price point might be more lucrative for the nonprofits in the short run, a lower price would equate to more personal connections and potential donors in the future. Each nonprofit organization should evaluate these challenges when considering their price point.

Another issue to consider when determining a price point is the anchoring effect that the price will have on future donations. Donors are generally anchored in their decision to donate based on several cues, including their previous donation and the amounts suggested by organizations (Bruyn & Prokopec, 2013). It is likely that potential donors will be similarly anchored by the price of the initial experience they purchased with the nonprofit. This provides a distinct challenge for the nonprofits; if this price is relatively low, donors that might be otherwise inclined to give more money might give less due to this effect.

Two potential strategies could alleviate these challenges. The nonprofit organizations could choose to offer two or more experiences at different prices, in order to anchor donors at a fitting price point. While these experiences can and likely should be very similar, the higher price point could offer enough additional benefits to the donor in order effectively differentiate the prices. Additionally, the nonprofits could choose to sell these experiences with an automatic “opt-in” donation set at a particular amount, which travelers could choose to increase or opt-out of entirely. This additional donation would then set an initial donor relationship with the organization, which would serve as the anchoring point for future donations. Setting the default to opt-in is well researched as an effective tool for guiding behavior (Johnson & Goldstein, 2003).

Be Specific, Authentic, and Customer-Centric

A persistent challenge for the nonprofit organizations nested within the Destination Equality platform will be to develop experiences that are authentic while also conforming to traveler’s expectations. The critical challenges that faced ProActividad during the first and second iterations of this project involved a lack of capacity to meet the expectations of vacationers. While the current funding model relies on these organization providing experiences that more authentically represent themselves as LGBT advocates, targeting vacationers still requires a customer-centric focus.

Mossier can provide important recommendations and feedback to the nonprofits nested within the Destination Equality. Ideally, the nonprofit organizations will be able to balance essential themes when developing their experiences, primarily highlighting the authentic differences of LGBT experiences in the target country with the commonalities that the LGBT people experience around the globe. While only the

nonprofit can develop an experience that realistically portrays their work, Mossier can provide assistance to help them communicate that work in compelling ways to their target audience.

Find a Balance

For Mossier, Destination Equality, and the nonprofit organizations associated with the platform, finding a balance between creating a unified brand and maintaining nonprofit autonomy will be challenging. The importance of having a reputable and recognizable name and mission, even for smaller socially minded organizations, should not be understated (Stebbins, & Hartman, 2013). This challenge should ideally create an impetus for the nonprofit organizations represented within Destination Equality to highlight the values and ideals that they share with Mossier.

When engaging these organizations with the Destination Equality platform, particular attention should be given to the potential tension that this could cause. The brand image of Destination Equality should serve as both a standard of quality and a representation of the values of the global LGBTI community. The nonprofits that are connected through Destination Equality should represent these values while still providing their own authentic and locally relevant experiences. Finding the balance in this relationship will likely be an iterative process for each organization, but keeping this tension in mind will be important to establishing a working relationship between DE and the nonprofit organizations.

Project Limitations

Identifying the limitations and blind spots of a developmental process is a crucial, if difficult task during organizational attempts to engage in new ventures. Therefore, it is important for our team to acknowledge some of the limitations that exist in this report. We hope that in the future, Mossier can help to fill in these gaps in our knowledge and create a more market sensitive and robust Destination Equality platform.

To begin, almost all of the data collected regarding viability of the models described in this report came from our experience working with ProActividad in the Dominican Republic. While this information proved invaluable in adapting the model to better fit their needs and capacity, it is possible that the other organizations Mossier is working with could have the right combination of financial capital, staffing, and expertise to engage in an extensive or limited social enterprise as described in Model 1 or 2. While we would argue that Destination Equality will likely still be a useful platform for these organizations, it is possible that the information we collected and used to adapt the model was specific to ProActividad and not representative of these other organizations. Care should be taken to not generalize this lack of capacity and funding as being

a systemic problem for all the organizations that Mossier partners with; it is possible that some could successfully engage in a travel-based social enterprise model.

Additionally, the feedback we received regarding the usability of the Destination Equality platform was limited to Minnesota and might not be directly representative of other travel and LGBT resource experts in the United States. While it is the intent of Mossier was to create a platform that was supported primarily by key actors in Minnesota, scaling Destination Equality to users in the rest of the U.S. might prove difficult if the views collected by our team are incongruent other actors. As Destination Equality seeks to expand, greater attention should be given to organizations and potential donors coming from outside Minnesota.

Finally, every project is limited by time, and this project is no exception. Due to the iterative nature of this project, our team was unable to engage with the final stages of the Destination Equality platform to the full extent that we would have hoped. As such, there are still many unknowns regarding the implementation and growth stages of the platform. Regardless, we hope that the insights and learning that this project has brought about can prepare Mossier and its partners to create a successful platform for Destination Equality.

Conclusion

Throughout our partnership with Mossier, this project experienced a series of shifts in response to our team's and the client's observations of the existing challenges and the feedback that we received from stakeholders. The current model for Destination Equality represents a culmination of these adaptive changes, but it is important to note that this iterative process is indefinite. While the Destination Equality platform is well-positioned to be a bridge between donors and the nonprofits most affected by expected reductions in LGBT funding, it is critical that Mossier continue to adapt the platform when necessary. In addition to the recommendations above, we encourage Mossier to continue reflecting critically on their assumptions, gathering real-time feedback on their implementation, and sharing lessons learned with stakeholders. This Developmental Evaluation approach will facilitate Mossier's ongoing organizational learning as they continue to support other emergent programs around the world.

While our team acknowledges that Destination Equality has only just begun, we are excited and hopeful for its potential. Organizations in the Global South, now more than ever, need to develop diversified funding streams in order to maintain stability and relevance. Though there are likely many changes to come, Destination Equality is uniquely positioned to support LGBT organizations in the Global South through the power of travel.

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Photo on cover page from Mossier website, <https://www.mossier.org/project/equality>, used with permission.

Appendix

Appendix A: Destination Equality Listening Session, Meeting Notes

Here are the central themes that emerged from our Fortune 500 Focus Group, hosted March 8, 2018:

1) Focus on individual vacation travelers

Corporate travelers adhere to specific business-related goals during their corporate travel. Additionally, they encounter more security and time limitations on their activities. With that in mind, it is advisable for Destination Equality (hereby known as DE) to **focus on LGBT vacation travelers as the target market**. Subsequent market research will include interviews and surveys of individual American LGBT vacationers to better understand how they would get the most out of DE.

2) Connect local LGBT organizations to travelers/travel agents

While travel agents already manage targeted destination vacations, they may lack connections to local organizations with the capacity to provide authentic experiences in select destinations. This is a critical area where DE can provide added value to travel agencies and local organizations. DE could provide the “vetting” of local organizations/experiences that travel agents would feel safe recommending to their customers. Future interviews with travel agencies will focus on how DE can provide these authentic connections.

3) Capitalize on existing distribution channels and strategic partnerships

AirBnB and other similar sites are established platforms offering targeted experiences for travelers. DE can tap into this and other existing distribution channels to **publicize the available experiences**. It may also be valuable to **explore partnerships with such channels**. These partnerships could range from having an official relationship with AirBnB to simply using the website for booking and advertising. Potential partners could include hotels (who want to provide more authentic experiences for their guests), travel management companies, LGBT-focused travel agents, and end-user platforms such as AirBnB.

4) Travelers are interested in active, authentic experiences

Travelers are curious individuals seeking adventures. While they may be interested in meeting local organizations, it is important that the experience incorporates an interactive and fun activity to make it more memorable. It would be valuable for DE to **encourage local partners to develop unique experiences for travelers**. Through interviews, surveys, and other research into potential activities and tourists’ “willingness to pay”, DE will develop engaging and memorable experiences for LGBT tourists that foster long term connections with the local partner.

Appendix B: Interview Questions: Follow-up to Fortune 500 Listening Session

The following questions were posed to participants of our Fortune 500 focus group to collect individualized feedback from Diversity & Inclusion professionals as we continue to develop the Destination Equality platform. These questions may also be used by Mossier in future market research.

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with us a bit more about Destination Equality. At this point in the development process, we're hoping to gather more information about what this resource could look like and how it could be used to impact global LGBT communities.

Since we didn't have much time for introductions during our meeting last month would you tell us a bit more about yourself?

Why were you interested in participating in this discussion on Destination Equality?

What was your first impression of the Destination Equality pitch?

Since the meeting, have any other ideas come to mind about Destination Equality?

What kinds of resources do you use when you travel?

What is your ideal travel resource?

What do you find it difficult to get from a travel resource?

What are essential aspects that DE needs to include (ie, you wouldn't use DE without them).

At its core, what do you think Destination Equality is, in its most successful state?

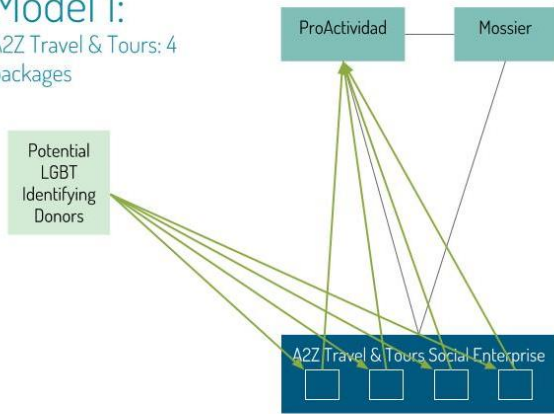
Do you think there is any partnerships / avenues that Mossier should look into before launch?

Do you have any other ideas on how to connect LGBT travelers from the states to local LGBT advocacy groups in other countries?

Appendix C: Compilation of Model Visualizations

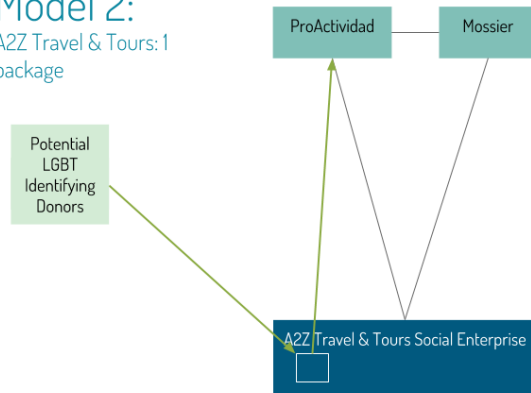
Model 1:

A2Z Travel & Tours: 4 packages



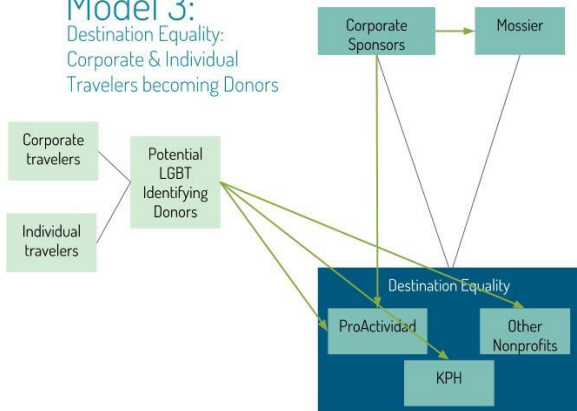
Model 2:

A2Z Travel & Tours: 1 package



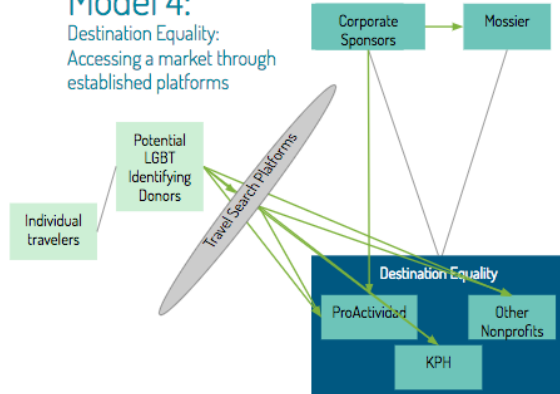
Model 3:

Destination Equality: Corporate & Individual Travelers becoming Donors



Model 4:

Destination Equality: Accessing a market through established platforms



Appendix D: Capstone Team Profile

Katrina Becker grew up in Madison, Wisconsin and moved to the Twin Cities to attend the University of Minnesota for undergrad. She has her Bachelor of Science in Business degree from the Carlson School of Management, with a focus on Public/Nonprofit Management, Entrepreneurship, and Sustainability Studies. While in undergrad, Katrina spent a semester abroad in Kenya, where she was first introduced to the idea of sustainable international development work as a career. After graduating, Katrina worked for WellShare International, a public health nonprofit in Minneapolis providing health education and resources to refugee and immigrant communities in the Twin Cities.

Hannah Bohn was born in Minnesota but spent most of her growing up years in Colorado. After receiving her Bachelor of Art in Anthropology and French, Hannah worked in a variety of roles in a variety of places including teaching English in Thailand and coordinating volunteers in The Bahamas. Her interest in community-driven development brought her back to Minnesota to study Development Practice at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, where she is currently in her final year. After graduation, Hannah hopes to work with NGOs, both domestically and internationally, to build organizational capacity and grow participatory leadership in communities.

Cody Raasch was born in Milwaukee Wisconsin, but moved to Minneapolis after High School to attend the University of Minnesota. While pursuing his undergraduate degree in Psychology and Political Science, Cody spent a semester abroad in Kenya where he studied behavioral factors for HIV transmission in the Kisumu area. After graduating, Cody worked for Touchstone Mental Health, a Minneapolis based nonprofit that works with people who have Severe and Persistent Mental Illness in the metro area. Cody is currently finishing a Masters of Development Practice degree, and recently worked with Rainforest Alliance in Guatemala. After graduation, Cody hopes to work with an International NGO either focused on building governmental capability or international mental health advocacy.

Richa Sharma is most recently from Roseville, MN. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Political Science/International Relations from Carleton College and is currently pursuing a Master of Human Rights degree at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Given her background as a refugee, she is interested in the rights of minority groups and vulnerable populations. In the summer of 2017, she interned for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva, Switzerland, where her appreciation for the value of innovation in addressing the needs of marginalized persons grew. She is inspired by the 'empowerment' aspect of Mossier's work and is excited to be part of the team. When not studying or working, Richa can be seen visiting her family and eating delicious food.

Appendix E: Mossier's Original Capstone Project Proposal



August 23rd, 2017

Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center
2733 Inglewood Ave S Minneapolis, Minnesota
Contact Person: Nick Alm, Executive Director
Phone: 651-341-0514
E-mail: nick@mossier.org

Mossier Mission Statement

“Investing in LGBT entrepreneurs across borders and generations”

The ventures that Mossier is responsible for starting or growing all have the goal of long term, sustainable, and scalable employment for LGBT individuals. Mossier provides real-life global business and social enterprise development experiences for University of Minnesota students by matching students from the Humphrey School of Public Policy and the Carlson School of Management with budding LGBT entrepreneurs in Kenya, Uganda, and the Dominican Republic. By helping these entrepreneurs develop business plans, strategic goals, and partnerships to meet the unique needs of each enterprise, the University of Minnesota students are better prepared for the global workplace, including a commitment to strong diversity and inclusion, as well as corporate social responsibility.

Description of the project

Macro Overview

In the Dominican Republic, Mossier is working with Proactividad. Proactividad works with LGBTI and other socially marginalized youth in the area of Sexual and Reproductive health, human rights and socio-economic development. The organization has several income generating ventures including a budding tour operator company with a view to promote tolerance through LGBTI tourism, provide training and employment opportunities for LGBTI youth, and generate funds to make the NGO less dependent on donor funding. Proactividad is designing tour packages that are staffed with local LGBT individuals and focused on the most LGBT friendly parts of the Dominican. For example: a trip might consist of staying in a villa staffed with local LGBTI persons who prepare local dishes and introduce guests to a side of the Dominican Republic few tourists get to experience. The entire itinerary is built around activities that let guests have a fun and authentic vacation that also benefits the local community. This model stands in stark contrast to spending a week in an all-inclusive hotel compound (e.g. Punta Caña) where few tourist dollars will benefit the local community, not to mention the LGBT community.

Mossier is focusing on supporting ProActividad with two specific tourist markets right now: LGBT softball players and LGBT Chorus members. The Dominican Republic produces more major league baseball players per capita than any other country. There are several sites and

attractions in the Dominican related to this. The Dominican Republic also has some amazing destinations and venues for choir performances. Instead of going to Vienna or London to sing, we are hoping to develop a package that is much more affordable that primarily benefits an organization serving the LGBT community directly. This all revolves around utilizing the LGBT travel industry to start getting more money to the LGBT populations in the countries that people are traveling to and putting local LGBT populations at the front of planning these trips so that they are not only top notch but also safe.

Learn more about Proactividad here: <https://www.proactividad.org>

Student Role

The student team will examine opportunities and feasibilities of what our Mosier believes to be a true sustainable tourism model, one that augments the paring of supply and demand by incorporating social policy and human rights considerations. The tourism industry holds the potential to make a serious impact, both from a social policy and an economic standpoint, in uplifting global LGBT populations. The reality is that revenues generated through all-inclusive resorts in Punta Cana, seldom impact the local community in any meaningful way, much less marginalized groups within that community. Many hospitality companies claim to care deeply about the values of diversity and inclusion, but concerns seldom extend beyond the United States?

Activities and Skills

Mossier will support* travel for 1-2 weeks to the Dominican Republic. Travel will be necessary to meet directly with the Proactividad team, interview local LGBT individuals, and network with other organizations working on LGBT issues.

** Limited support in the form of a partial travel grant, exact amount to be determined.*

Stakeholders

- Proactividad/A2Z Travel
- Carlson Companies
- Other Hospitality and Incentive Companies
- Minnesota Twins

Research Questions

- Desk review of sustainable tourism concept through lens of SDGs
- Market systems research – demand side. Research key data related to U.S. based travelers with a concentration the LGBT market:
 - How much do people spend annually?
 - Where are people travelling to?
 - What kinds of experiences are U.S. travelers looking for?
 - Tourism industry research/destination equality

- Outcome and impact forecasting with Proactividad to quantify the direct economic impact of A2Z
 - How will these dollars support their HIV/Sexual health mission?
 - How many jobs can we create for LGBT individuals?
 - Marriott International Partnership – what worked? What was the impact?
- Strategic planning with Proactividad to determine
 - What goals does Proactividad want to set both financially and in terms of the additional programming that they want to execute with the revenue from A2Z?
 - How do we scale the program over the next year? The next five years?
 - What do good business plans look like for tour operators? Who are successful tour operators in the U.S. and The Dominican? What defines their success?
 - What partnerships has Proactividad already leveraged that have worked? What was the impact and what kinds of partners do we need moving forward?

Additional/General Questions

Proposed Deliverables

Students will develop a report summarizing research in all or a subset of the above areas and will develop a companion presentation for use with the hospitality companies based in Minnesota to

- Increase awareness of A2Z’s model and why Mossier supports them and
- Develop partnerships with Mossier to help make A2Z a successful tour operator in the Dominican Republic.

The program will result in a presentation for major MN-based hospitality and incentive companies.

Assumptions and Special Consideration

- a. International travel highly suggested
- b. No additional language requirements, Spanish and/or French proficiency a major plus
- c. Students will not need access to restricted information

Evaluation Criteria

Students will be assessed on the thoroughness of the analysis and how effective their messaging campaign comes across in front of potential partners. Thorough answers to the specific research questions will be deemed as satisfactory for this project. Students will work together with Mossier’s team to set additional standards and evaluation criteria before the project begins.

Audience

- a. Mossier’s team and our donors
- b. Potential investors and partners
- c. State officials and other elected officials
- d. Minnesota-based hospitality and incentive companies

Appendix A: Organizational History

Kevin J. Mossier was a Minnesotan who fought to put activism and entrepreneurship in the same arena by starting the first openly LGBT travel business, RSVP Vacations, in 1985. Kevin's company is generally recognized as the creator of the LGBT travel industry. RSVP Vacations followed the Minnesota Keystone corporate model by giving 5% of all pre-tax profits to charity. In addition, Kevin frequently exercised his influence as a prominent business leader in the Twin Cities by working with local politicians to advance conversations about equity for marginalized populations. When he passed away in 1996, the Kevin J. Mossier Foundation was established, and over the next two decades it gave millions of dollars to LGBT organizations in Minnesota and around the world. The foundation was a lead funder of the Minnesota marriage equality movement in 2012.

One of the trustees for the Kevin J. Mossier Foundation was Charlie Rounds, then president of RSVP Vacations and a longtime friend of Kevin. Charlie was one of the first openly gay employees at Carlson Companies. The Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center has been established because of the special focus that Charlie, along with his husband, Mark Hiemenz, have put on building an intergenerational LGBT movement. They realized that the LGBT community is not like most other minority communities, wherein generally people share their minority status with other generations. Most LGBT people do not have LGBT parents and most likely will not have LGBT children. This poses a unique threat to this community's progress of the past five decades. Thus, Mossier is focused on funding internships that are matched with mentors who have extensive experience in the field. Mossier was co-founded by Charlie Rounds (62) and Nick Alm (21), a student at The Carlson School of Management. The organization is youth driven and employs four students at The Carlson School and four students at The Humphrey School for Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. Several people currently serve the organization in volunteer roles supporting a young team that is majority women and over 40% people of color. Kevin's legacy continues to live on in a time where the energy of young people and the expertise of older people is truly the answer to the world's most pressing issues. This model again puts in Minnesota at the forefront of the LGBT movement.