

Washington State Farmers Market Association

Strategic Plan

2012-2014



“To support vibrant and sustainable farmers markets in Washington State through member services, education and advocacy.”

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Approved on April 16, 2012

Introduction

In 2010, the Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) board of directors recognized the organization needed to develop a strategic plan. During the previous ten years, the farmers market industry in Washington State has blossomed with unprecedented growth in new markets, increasing demand for food sold by the farmer who grew it, and a loyal shopper base. As markets have become popular, the market place has changed and markets today are facing the challenges of a successful industry – more competition, increased complexity and the need for more professionalization. As the industry has changed, the board realized the organization has to change to continue to be relevant to the industry.

Since its founding in April, 1979 by 14 farmers markets, WSFMA has provided a core set of services to members: a) insurance; b) education and networking at the annual conference; c) advocacy to retain and expand programs that benefit markets and farmers; and d) a variety of services to help new and existing markets. The board felt a strategic planning process would provide a disciplined, reflective process to evaluate the organization's strengths and challenges, history, refine its mission and become more strategic about its services and activities so better support the farmers market industry. This will help ensure that farmers markets continue to provide effective sales locations for Washington's family farmers and the communities that love and value their markets.

This strategic plan will be used by the board to guide its priorities and activities over the next three to five years. It provides a framework for decision-making. This is a working document that the board will use and update regularly. The purpose is to provide a framework so that WSFMA can continue to provide needed services and be strategic about responding to new opportunities, while remaining true to the needs and expectations of its membership. Washington is blessed to have many organizations that provide support services to farmers, guide policy, work to develop a stronger, locally focused food system and increase access to healthy food in all communities. This plan helps define WSFMA's role in this broad and deep network of organizations so that our membership, partners, and the public know what to expect of us.

About the Planning Process

Washington State Farmers Market Association (WSFMA) undertook strategic planning, with a focus on planning for sustainability, in 2011. With grant funding from USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program, the organization was able to hire a professional planning consultant. The board met for two planning retreats, in June and October. In addition, a wide range of members and stakeholders were consulted via surveys and telephone interviews conducted by board and staff. This input came from member markets throughout the State, non-member markets, partner organizations, other state associations, national farmers market advocates, farmers and funders.

We would like to thank the board and staff members who played a leadership role in developing this plan:

- Teri Wheeler, Board President, Pike Place Market

- Will O'Donnell, Board Treasurer, Port Townsend Farmers Market
- Lori Musgrave, Board Vice-President, Spokane Northside and Deer Park Farmers Markets
- Judy Kirkhuff, Board member, Grants Advisory Team, Seattle Farmers Market Association
- Karen Kinney, Interim Executive Director
- Don Eastridge, Board Member, Yakima Farmers Market
- Christina Martin, Board Member, Lake Forest Park, Kirkland and Crossroads Farmers Markets
- Colleen Donovan, Board member, WSU Small Farms Program
- Joel Wachs, Advisor to the Board, Legislative/Policy Team Chair
- Patrice Barrentine, Advisor to the Board, WSDA Outreach and Food Safety
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Mission –

“To support vibrant and sustainable farmers markets in Washington State through member services, education and advocacy.”

Vision for 2014

Throughout Washington State, there are strong, resilient farmers markets that effectively leverage their collective knowledge, actions and interests to better achieve their goals and create a powerful, professional farmers market community. Vendors are successful and sales (especially from farm products) continue to grow at all farmers markets. Farmers markets are highly valued by the public, educated consumers value Washington agriculture, and this ethic is reflected in local and state policy.

The Washington State Farmers Market Association is an engaged, well-respected, and trusted organization; all members understand, support, and contribute towards its success representing and sustaining the farmers market community. With adequate staff capacity and skilled board leadership, the WSFMA has diverse sources of revenue to sustain itself financially. The WSFMA is an effective advocate and the go-to organization for farmers market issues in Washington State and nationally.

Strategic Priorities

To achieve its mission and vision over the next three years, the WSFMA will focus on four strategic priorities:

- **Expand critical business services:** Leverage collective power of members to provide critical business services to individual markets at affordable rates, such as expanded insurance options.
- **Grow networking, annual conference and trainings:** Develop funding and leverage partnerships to organize new and improved trainings that build the capacity of members to achieve their goals.
- **Represent farmers markets in advocacy, research and promotion:** Working with strategic partners, provide leadership on behalf of WSFMA members in statewide advocacy, policy, research and the promotion of farmers markets.
- **Strengthen the organizational capacity of the WSFMA:** Transition the WSFMA to a stable, mature organization that has appropriate systems, funding and staffing to fulfill its mission, implement plans, and uphold all responsibilities to its members.

Goals and Objectives	2012	2013	2014
EXPAND CRITICAL BUSINESS SERVICES:			
<i>Improve insurance and explore additional business services that the WSFMA members need.</i>			
1. Offer liability insurance to member markets, evaluating regularly to improve the offering.			
2. Research additional insurance policies (e.g. Directors and Officers, vendor insurance, etc.), evaluating feasibility and revenue potential			
3. Continue to set industry standards through evolution and monitoring of ROOTS guidelines.			
4. Work collaboratively to begin to address vendor integrity issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create fact sheet b. Convene discussion with key partners 			
5. Research best avenue to offer market manager professional certification.			
6. Become the leading resource to support expanded use of EBT wireless technology at farmers markets, working closely with partners			
GROW NETWORKING, ANNUAL CONFERENCE & TRAININGS:			
<i>Improve members' ability to network and share resources among themselves; develop funding and leverage partnerships to organize new and improved trainings that build the capacity of members to achieve their goals.</i>			
1. Facilitate peer-to-peer networking by upgrading electronic tools.			
2. Organize and systematize annual conference and continue to improve quality.			
3. Organize market manager training opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. FMPP funded Market Manager Toolkit and regional workshops 			
4. Explore organizing training for vendors on critical needs (e.g. marketing, signage, etc).			
REPRESENT FARMERS MARKETS IN ADVOCACY, RESEARCH & PROMOTION:			
<i>Working with strategic partners, provide leadership on behalf of WSFMA members in statewide advocacy, policy and research.</i>			
1. Refine annual WSFMA Member Directory and improve distribution so that it is more useful to targeted audiences.			
2. Research, strategize and advocate for policy affecting members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Defense of federal food assistance programs b. Identify priority issues for advocacy annually c. Provide leadership for Farmers Market Week, including continuation of farmers market tours for legislators 			
3. Develop accurate, user-friendly information systems for member market data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review and revise membership application b. Develop annual "industry" report to members 			
4. Develop, fund and implement "shop farmers markets" campaign.			
STRENGTHEN THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY OF THE WSFMA:			

Goals and Objectives	2012	2013	2014
<i>Transition the WSFMA to a stable, mature organization that has appropriate systems, funding and staffing to fulfill its mission, implement plans, and uphold all responsibilities to its members.</i>			
1. Develop, refine and document core operational policies, procedures and practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Internal controls, financial management, and accounting manual b. Finalize 501(c)3 incorporation c. Overall information management and office infrastructure 			
2. Improve internal, member and external communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review and update website b. Develop and implement communications plan (e.g. newsletters, social media, annual report) 			
3. Increase revenue through new fundraising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop and implement fundraising plan b. Develop a systematic approach to grants (prospect research, proposals, tracking) c. Explore new member categories to improve equity and increase revenues 			
4. Increase board effectiveness through more proactive recruitment, retention and training			
5. Increase staff capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Grow the staff to 1.5 FTEs in 2012 b. Provide professional development opportunities 			

A Note about Sustainability

WSFMA is a grassroots, primarily volunteer organization. The organization has made significant strides in operating in a more business-like manner over the past year, and the board is committed to continuing this trajectory in the future. The main sources of revenue for WSFMA are member dues, conference income, insurance premiums and grants. Our goal as an organization is to utilize membership dues to maintain core operations. In addition, we will continue to offer insurance as a member benefit, operating this “program” on a near break-even basis, and to organize the conference, which generates fees and sponsorships and is subsidized somewhat by member dues. We will supplement this core operating budget with ongoing and project specific grants and other revenue streams. We will only seek grants that are in alignment with our mission and offer clear benefit to our members.

Monitoring Our Progress

The board will track progress toward the goals and objectives outlined above via regular reporting by the Executive Director and an annual review of progress at the board retreat. In addition, the board is committed to monitoring organizational health indicators such as financial health and membership renewals, and to ensuring that the systems are in place to operate core programs in a business-like manner with good customer service to members.