

NDFMGA Strategic Plan

Drafted March 2009

Mission: Educating and connecting North Dakota farmers markets, growers, producers and customers.

Purpose:

- Build a farmers market program that connects producers and customers,
- Develop marketing tools and strategies for producers and market managers to ensure long-term sustainability of rural North Dakota, and
- Increase consumer and producer awareness of the benefits of fresh, locally grown products and to make them available to customers.

The goal of the strategic planning meeting was to create a plan that will; help the Association meets its purpose and mission, help the Association meet member needs and allow the Association to become self-sustaining long into the future.

Goal 1: To become self sustaining

Objective 1: Membership fees

Actions:

- Review membership fee structure at annual meeting in 2010 to evaluate how the new structure is working for managers and vendors.
- Charge participants a fee for attendance and meals at the annual conference.
- Review and evaluate the purpose of the annual conference and decide if it is to make money or just to break even.

Objective 2: Board member involvement

Actions:

- Board members will visit markets in their respective regions. These visits will be in person visits to the market, a vendor meeting, a market planning meeting, or market board meetings. Regional representatives will work together to decide who will visit each market in their area of responsibility.
- Board members will be involved in recruitment of new markets.
- Board members will actively promote the NDFMGA and its products.
- The ECH will help the NDFMGA Board to outline talking points for in-person visits by board members.

*Cross reference this set of actions with the education and promotion actions to look for marketing and talking point materials actions.

Objective 3: (Long term objective) Work to build markets as permanent “places” within communities.

Actions:

- Search for grants and funding opportunities that would benefit markets and advertise those to members. Assist members with grant writing when possible.
- Work with city governments and economic development entities to promote awareness of the economic impact of markets and to promote markets as a desirable ‘place’.
- Build targeted marketing materials to distribute that highlight the benefits of farmers markets within communities.

Objective 4: Pursue grant funding

Actions:

- A subcommittee to address grant funding will be formed. The subcommittee members will be: Dan Folske, Holly Mawby and Ilene will identify grant opportunities that may result in operational funds for the NDFMGA.
- Each grant identified by the subcommittee will be acted upon as needed;
 - Written internally
 - Written by a writer hired by the Association
 - Co-written with another organization
- Ilene will search for grants via the library and grants databases in Minot at least twice per year.
- The Association will apply for 4 grants by 12/31/2010.

Objective 5: Cookbook Sales

Actions:

- Find an intern to help do the data entry and formatting for a NDFMGA cookbook.
- Sell the cookbooks at farmers markets.
- Have a theme of fresh, local, healthy recipes using products from farmers markets.
- Form a subcommittee to set submission guidelines.
- Involve Karen Ehrens and have input from county health nurses and home extension agents for health section or health tidbits throughout the cookbook.
- Look for grant opportunities to pay for the printing.

- Make at least \$2,500 net revenue from the sale of the cookbooks.

Objective 6: Sponsors and Donors

Actions:

- Create targeted marketing material to inform potential donors and sponsors.
- Form a subcommittee to seek out sponsors and donors.
- Sell web site links, have a sponsor page, and sell advertisement space for sponsors in the cookbook*.
- Possible donors/sponsors include the following:
 - Sunopta
 - Cenex
 - Cargill
 - Johnny’s Selected Seeds
 - Seed companies
 - Individuals
 - Ehren’s Consulting
 - Endowments/memorials
 - Blue Cross Blue Shield
 - Hospitals
 - Banks
 - Energy or green energy companies
 - Rural Electric Cooperatives
 - Farmer’s Union
 - Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture
 - FARrMS
 - ND Department of Agriculture
 - Farmers Union
 - ND Farm Bureau
- Sponsors will be listed on signs at member markets.
- A goal of \$10,000 has been set in sponsorships and donations by 12/31/2010.

Goal 2: Education

Objective 1: Annual conference

Actions:

- Holding the annual conference in conjunction with other organizations is fine as long as the NDFMGA has equal representation on the planning committee.
- If the NDFMGA annual conference is held in conjunction with the NDDA Local Foods Summit or other organization’s conference:
 - Ask that it be held in Bismarck, Jamestown, or Mandan
 - Ask that the dates be early November or Mid-February with November preferred

- Ask that it be held on a Friday evening and a Saturday or Veteran's day and the night before but NOT during a Pride of Dakota showcase and that the planning committee be respectful in agenda planning of Adventist member beliefs.
- The NDFMGA should be able to plan and choose presenters that meet the needs of their members.
- Specifically invite or ask the school garden grant programs to present.
- Include basic 'how-to' information in sessions.
- Invite 'real-life' speakers and include 'real-life' topics at sessions.
- Provide very *specific* information at sessions.
- Include informal networking/sharing time.
- Include sessions for both growers and managers.

Objective 2: Newsletter

Actions:

- Post newsletter archives to web site.
- Include educational topics from the 'Education – Vendors' section of this plan.
- Include the following features in newsletters: field days, tours, market manager training, legislative updates.
- Invite vendor members to submit information about themselves for 'Featured Vendor' articles. Have a form on the web site for vendors to submit this information.
- Board members will be responsible for short articles. These articles will rotate by region with each region having the same quarter each year.

Objective 3: Education – Customers

Actions:

- Find and order customer educational materials and put the NDFMGA logo on them to distribute at markets.
- Create a resource list and distribute it to markets. The markets can then use the resources to give customers ideas on where to go to find information on healthy food choices, farmers market values, etc.
- Print bag stuffers for markets to hand out to customers or provide to vendors to give away.
- Work with the NDDA local foods initiative to promote farmers markets, fresh, local, and healthy eating.
- Provide recipe cards and cooking information to market managers to distribute. Post these files to the web site for download.
- Post farmers market games, puzzles and learning activities on the NDFMGA web site kids page.

Objective 4: Education – Vendors

Actions:

- Topics to be included in newsletter:

- Insurance
- Food safety
- Health department regulations
- Handling of animal products at markets
- Marketing
- Cover the listed topics above at the annual conference in a vendor forum format.
- The ECH will market educational opportunities in areas of member needs.
- The board members will help the ECH and other board members identify regional Agricultural shows and conferences where the ECH and NDFMGA could present seminars on educational topics of interest to its members.
- Post educational information on new web site.
- Explore Prairie Public's weekly forum on topics that listener's suggest to see if there is a place for the NDFMGA to present.
- The ECH and the NDFMGA board will work to organize either an annual or biennial tour for education of vendors.
- The NDFMGA will hold field days:
 - 3 per year
 - Explore having FARrMS help with this
 - Rotate the field days around the state geographically and rotate seasons
 - Make the locations showcase or best practices
 - The board will consider an application process for farmers/producers/vendors who would like to be a field day location. The process will stress that this is an honor and make the selection desirable

Objective 5: Education – Market Managers

Actions:

- Send out personalized letter to Market Managers inviting them to attend the annual conference and meeting.
- Expand farmers market guide to become a market managers guide.
- Board member visits* see sustainability section of strategic plan*.
- Research online training opportunities and bring incentive ideas to board, such as a 'certified market manager' course.
- Put together 'talking points' and marketing materials for Board members to take along when visiting with market managers to help explain the benefits of the NDFMGA, how to take advantage of services, and how to approach city and county government and regional organizations for help.
- Create a checklist/agenda/question sheet for board members to use when speaking to market managers, their board, or vendor groups.
- Explore working with SARE, MOSES, or OFRF to create a 'Certified Market Manager' Course for members.

Goal 3: Advertising and Promotion

Objective 1: NDFMGA/Farmers Market Directory

Actions:

- Change the format to become a book with a map in the middle of the book.
- Request that the NDDA print copies be delivered to appropriate rest stations, tourist information areas and Chambers of Commerce within the state instead of to the markets.
- Request that a stack be sent to the ECH for distribution as needed or requested by market managers and vendors.
- In the future, work with the ND Division of Tourism to promote the directory and to create regional brochures for tourism that include farmers markets.
- Encourage farmers market managers to submit information to the ND Dept. of Tourism for inclusion in the North Dakota tourism guides.

Objective 2: Web site

Actions:

- Transfer domain name and web site from NDDA to gobigmedia.com and to ECH for creation and maintenance.
- Ask web site viewers to contact us with trade show or agricultural show information, annual meeting suggestions and opportunities for promotion.
- Continue pages on web site that contain specific vendor and market information, photos, and events.
- *cross reference with other goals and objectives for web site content*.
- Have a sponsor page with links to sponsor web sites.
- Make sure all links are in working order at all times.
- In the future, look to including a blog, forum, or chat function.
- Include free marketing tips for managers.

Objective 3: Booths/Trade Shows/Mini-Commercials

Actions:

- Build a script, talking points, or information sheet for board members and others manning booths.
- Explore having a booth at the following:
 - Marketplace
 - ND Grocers Association annual conference
 - Regional Agriculture shows and winter shows
 - Annual utility providers meetings
 - Local coop meetings
 - Farmer's Union meetings
 - College campus community days

Objective 4: Logo items

Actions:

- Send vendors who 'register' their information with the Association 1 roll of stickers and 5 shelf talkers for free and include an order form and letter to encourage re-orders.
- Require a minimum order for logo'd material.
- Continue to offer logo products.
- Ask members and board members to promote the logo locally on public service TV/Radio/News shows.

Objective 5: Coupons/drawings/door prizes

Actions:

- This is a great idea for later, long term planning.
- Put a feature in the newsletter now about coupon ideas and secret vendor prizes for markets to use during the season.

Objective 6: Dignitary visits

Actions:

- The NDFMGA will work with markets to identify and invite celebrities, dignitaries, and VIP's to the markets to promote events and sales.
- The NDFMGA will assist markets with the effort by using official letterhead, writing a letter from the Association to the identified dignitary inviting them to the requesting market, and then following up if necessary to ensure the recipient has received the request.

Objective 7: Vendor recruitment

Actions:

- The board and administration will speak to teachers, advisors, FFA, 4-H, agricultural class instructors, Home-Education instructors, and others to encourage them to participate with students in becoming farmers market vendors.
- The NDFMGA will send specific targeted marketing information to the above mentioned groups to encourage student participation as vendors at markets.
- The NDFMGA will send out a press release about the benefits of being a farmers market vendor. The target date for this is April of each year.
- The board and administration will seek out additional ways to recruit vendors such as tidbit articles in coop and credit union newsletters.

Objective 8: Future Promotion

Actions:

- Explore cost of billboard advertising.
- Approach Newman signs regarding no-logo'd informational billboards such as the 'smile' board is used currently. The new sign could just say something like "eat local" or "eat fresh" or "shop at a farmers market".