

PROFESSIONAL FARMER ORGANIZATION TOOLKIT

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Toolkit Introduction

Welcome to the Association Toolkit. This work is intended to be a guide to help establish new, agriculture-related businesses or member associations. Associations are powerful ways to collaborate in agriculture to achieve lasting improvements for farmers, producers, businesses and other allied industries in the value chain that grow crops, utilize those resources and feed or fuel the world.

You may pick up this work with the intention to start up an association. You may find you are not at the beginning but somewhere further along in the startup process. This is your resource. We have tried to offer our suggestions and the background you need to start from wherever you are on the journey.

The Toolkit addresses start-up plans, developing a strategic plan, operating as a board of directors, communications strategies, membership programs, having an operational plan to achieve policy goals, and how to properly set a value to services used to attract sponsors and advertisers and acquire grants and membership fees.

Associations operate chronically underfunded. If the authors make one suggestion strongly in this work, read about how to consider your value. Use that concept of value to communicate what you bring to the table to improve your defined scope of operation.

This work can be utilized for many associations. It was especially intended for the Cambodia Aquaculture Association – a courageous and innovative set of farmers and company representatives who show the resilience and tenacity it will take to develop an industry where one has not existed. We value entrepreneurs and want to thank them and ASA/WISHH for choosing to let us help.

About WISHH

ASA's WISHH connects trade and development across global market systems, improving food security. Knowing that protein plays an essential role in human nutrition, visionary U.S. soybean growers founded WISHH in 2000 to serve as a catalyst in emerging markets. WISHH brings the power of strategic partnerships to our unique market-systems approach. Local business leaders, governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as academic institutions join WISHH in increasing demand and fueling economic growth for the sustained availability of nutritious and affordable human foods and livestock feeds.

Chapter 1: Association Start-Up

Business associations move mountains; they create industries and, thus, jobs and economic growth. They can grow a tax base. They provide important educational activities to answer questions with one voice. Associations are an incredible way to be heard.

An association is a group that has joined together to collectively address common themes and issues to help develop an industry sector. Associations are not created to corner a market or deny others access to expertise or programs.

Make no mistake about it, though: Associations must compete and show off a focused intent to be heard and achieve their goals. There is competition for members, for grants and for talent in their boards and staff. There is competition for space and time to successfully implement a communications plan. There is competition for attention from policy makers and decision takers to move the association's points of view forward. The one thing an association cannot do and survive is compete against itself and against its members.

Successful leaders have learned not to undertake major projects – like starting an association – on their own. They have learned to trust the expertise and commitments of others and to share responsibilities. If you have already resolved that you alone are going to do all of the tasks necessary to start an association, then you probably have some important lessons to learn in leadership. If the association is to be successful, it will need more than one person – one “hero” – who does everything.

Now is the time to start recruiting and accepting help to start your association. Use a team of people to do tasks suggested in this section of the Toolkit.

Associations come in many forms. This guide undertakes to talk about agricultural business associations. These can include farmers or producers; processors and sellers; and any of the links in the supply chain, including transportation, finance, food safety, communications and data, and regionally likeminded business colleagues. It is best to define an association based on its mission, not on its membership. Associations may elect to have many different types or levels of membership. The successful association starts with an advantage if it can communicate what it wants to do. That is why we are going to begin with your mission.

Define Your Mission

The biggest question a start-up faces is the first one: What is the purpose, or mission, of the association? Now that you have a basic understanding of associations, you can start creating one. Begin by clarifying what the purpose of the association is. The mission is all about meeting a need in the community. It is the most important reference point for board members to do their jobs.

Write an initial, basic mission statement. At this point, the mission statement needs to be generally descriptive. Note that later on, during strategic planning (Chapter 2), the mission statement should be refined so that all key stakeholders have input to – and complete understanding of – the mission. The following guidelines may be helpful to the team when writing the first, basic mission statement:

1. The mission statement describes the overall purpose of the organization. It addresses the question, "Why does the organization exist?" If it is primarily to meet a need in a particular business-sphere, then starting a business association is indeed a good idea.
2. The statement can be in a wide variety of formats and lengths. It can range from a few sentences to a few pages. At this stage in the development of the association, it might be best to keep the mission statement to, at most, about a quarter page.
3. Write a brief mission statement. Consider at least these specific aspects of the mission:
 - a. The primary benefits and services to members – the difference the association aims to make.
 - b. The groups of clients who will benefit from those services.
 - c. The values that will guide how the association will operate.
 - d. How the association would like others to view it.
4. It is often useful to refine the first, basic mission statement. Add or delete a sentence or a word from the mission statement until the team feels that the wording accurately describes the purpose of the new organization. Have potential board members review the wording of the mission statement to get their feedback.

Are the Services Needed?

This may sound like a trite question, but are potential members really in need of your association's services? Often, someone feels that a particular, potential group of members has a strong, unmet need, only to find out later – after a lot of struggle to get started – that the clients really did not have that need at all.

If no other association has been started yet to serve what you think are the unmet needs of your member groups, then that might be a good reason to start an association – or it might be good reason to believe that the needs among members truly do not exist at all.

Members or clients for services will come to a program based on what they want. They will stay based on what they need. Therefore, do some upfront homework to learn about the members. That is the purpose of basic market research. Make some calls to leaders in each of the groups of members that the association intends to serve. Share your ideas for a new association. Get their opinions.

Is the Need Already Being Addressed?

It is not uncommon for people who want to start an association to also want to be the founder of their own association. However, as you start, if you are meeting a need that is already being addressed by other existing organizations, then do not ignore those organizations. If you do, then you will end up competing with them for membership and funding.

Establish your own domain and your own set of issues. You may differentiate yourself with a different outlook, a different region or different values to extend to members or clients. You will be much better off if you at least make an initial effort to contact those with similar missions to see how you might collaborate with them.

So, when doing your basic market research, find out if there are other associations doing what you intend to do. If you are entering a field where another group failed, double your research time. Examine what happened to make sure that you don't repeat those same mistakes.

Establishing Legal Status and Obligations

An association is a business and should be properly, legally registered as required under local law. This can vary from country to country, so strong, local advice will be needed. It can be important to network with other successful associations. It can be important to check in with the different levels of government in your country.

Associations can be taxed or untaxed. Some nations will not tax associations but have regulations related to taxing certain functions, such as sales tax on items sold, like books or periodicals.

Usually, Articles of Incorporation, or other legal documents that specify what your association will do and how it will be regulated under law, will be needed. You will need bylaws that specify how your association will operate and what its duties and obligations are.

It can be important to get good legal advice, study other association start-ups and visit government offices for more background. You may need accounting advice from a professional. Make certain your legal registration permits you to conduct the services and collect the fees that you have planned.

Choosing a Staff

How much staff do you need? As a start-up, that will seem like the right question. Who is going to do this work? You do need to analyze your business plan. Associations are member-centered and focused. They operate with volunteers; some associations operate with the volunteer members doing the work. This is not likely going to work for a business association.

How much staff can you afford? That's the right question. Being an association can mean staying lean or, depending on a grant, allying with another organization. Associations are created in an era of specialization globally. Do you need an events expert? A data person? Should you contract out accounting and finance services or work with an allied association for some services? This chapter moves through some of those options.

If you are a basic start-up, a committee may be needed. Undertaking a search and hiring is difficult for a whole board to undertake. It may be most efficient for a smaller group to convene and conduct some hiring plans.

Hiring Staff

The people an organization hires is a big decision. Organization structure is just as important. You want a strong director, but one who listens to members, accepts feedback and has the political savvy to hold firm when it might matter most to resolve issue. For that, the most important quality will be character. "Character is your fate," the mantra says. We wish it got taught in more business schools.

When you are making that choice, be sure to ask about problems the candidate has faced and how they overcame them. The only surefire, certain predictor of future performance is past performance. That means checking references and making sure they are qualified references. Most hiring is done without references. That's a colossal mistake. If your candidate cannot document and support a track record of success, look for someone else.

The amount of staff to hire depends on your budget and the tasks at hand. Do not overstaff, but don't overwork either. Burnout is common in association life. Sharing staff with other associations is also an option.

Create job descriptions with solid explanations. Be specific. How much can a single person do? Today, that's a lot. There are many examples of strong associations that run on just a few people. They need technology to keep them efficient. They need volunteer board members to do some of the tasks and some

contractors to follow financial and administrative matters, but it is manageable. *Sample job descriptions are included in Appendix 1.1.*

When you have your startup, moving your next choice should be a well-qualified administrative executive or assistant. This allows a director to focus on supporting the members and your mission. You can combine this skill with someone who can do communication work or policy work. Next, add a program manager. This is someone with a specifically defined set of technical skills to deliver services. As you add more, they can be divided into regions or specialties. Make sure they are a communicator.

Communications and drafting content for publications and media is everyone's responsibility. You may want a communications hire. Do that quickly if your association has a heavy lift to push new policy. If you are messaging, hire a strong messenger.

You might need a data person. Analysis and commentary is one of the chief values of associations to members. If you are in a conflicted policy situation, having a quantifiable set of strong analysis and good research and writing can make all the difference in the world.

You will need financial and operations management. Set up procedures so multiple people review the books, and do an audit – even if the audit is from one of the board members. Open the books and let some sunshine show your accomplishments at management. Documenting strong financial management is a key component in some grant applications. Having your grant maker over to look at your books and receipts with a cup of coffee or tea can make all the difference in convincing them you are a good investment.

Later in this chapter we will discuss contracting, and many of these jobs can be contracted out as you grow.

Association director

The fastest new hire you may want to make is a director. A director is someone who will run your association professionally, be the public spokesperson, be a leader helping the board make decisions, operate the business, and be financially accountable. Finding all of those remarkable qualities in one person can be a daunting task. This section discusses that decision.

First of all, do you need one? With a strong, volunteer board of directors, you might be able to get by without this position. A director needs to understand the business or a similar business. It is common that the person who starts an association wants to become the first chief executive.

Not all associations have a chief executive. The board may decide that it wants to continue completely as a volunteer organization, with members of the board providing the day-to-day completion of tasks. If that is the case, then board members must decide how they will provide the ongoing leadership and energy to really do that. This type of board is often considered to be a “working” or “administrative” board. If the culture is that it wants everyone on the team is to be viewed as equals, then it might choose a board model known as a “collective.” This is the spokesperson and the accountable financial agent. A draft position description is provided in Appendix 1.1.

Association organization

There are several organizational charts based on agricultural association sizes and duties – from single-purpose enterprise to multi-purpose to complex. Did you form your association to help farms make better business plans and educate about technical agronomic options? That's an example of a single purpose enterprise. Is the board tasking itself to help farms as in the first example and in addition wants to help farmers market their products? That is more complex. Depending on the number of farmers and duties of each it may be hard to find someone who understands both processes.

- **Small, single purpose association:**
 - Director
 - Administrative professional
- **Small, multi-purpose; or medium, single purpose association:**
 - Director
 - Administrative professional
 - Program manager(s)
- **Medium, multi-purpose (complex) association**
 - Director
 - Administrative professional
 - Program manager(s)
 - Communications specialist
 - Financial specialist
- **Large (complex) association**
 - Director
 - Administrative professional
 - Program manager(s)
 - Communications specialist
 - Financial specialist
 - Subject matter expert (data/analysis/agriculture science area expert)

Finance and Accounting

Associations have an obligation to act as responsible stewards in managing their financial resources and are charged with protecting the financial health of their organization. To fulfill these responsibilities, associations should adhere to sound accounting principles that produce reliable financial information and ensure fiscal responsibility. Associations should use their financial resources to accomplish their missions in effective and efficient ways and should establish clear policies and procedures to regularly monitor how funds are used. Associations should also prepare financial information according to best practice and regularly have a third-party accounting body review financial statement presentations for accuracy and to help build public trust. Finally, associations must comply with all legal and financial requirements, which include paying certain types of taxes and filing reports with regulatory agencies.

Accounting and financial controls

Every association needs a reliable system of financial controls. These are procedures and verifications that protect assets, detect errors, prevent mistakes or the misuse of funds, and provide protection from liability for management and the board. Controls typically involve procedures for authorization and approval, as well as proper documentation and the physical security of assets. Every association – no matter how small – should seek qualified accounting expertise to assist in developing, implementing and monitoring an appropriate system of financial controls.

Keeping an organization financially healthy starts with healthy books. This includes numerous activities and responsibilities, depending upon the size of the organization and the volume and types of transactions. For example, items that need to be maintained may include cash receipts and disbursements, accounts receivable ledgers, accounts payable registers, payroll ledgers and oversight of the use of debt.

Other duties vary widely, however, from one organization to another and may include preparing checks, making bank deposits, compiling budget data, investment account management, travel/expense reimbursements and contract management. Reconciling the bank statement to the journals each month and transferring relevant financial information to a general ledger create the foundation of the financial statements used to present to committees, boards and other important stakeholders.

It is vital that management ensures accounting staff have the appropriate subject knowledge as well as a suitable accounting software program. The function also could be outsourced to experienced professionals to ensure it is managed effectively. Associations should adopt written financial policies and procedures to ensure accuracy of information while protecting all confidential data. Associations should ensure separation of financial duties to serve as a checks-and-balances system to prevent theft, fraud or inaccurate reporting to the greatest extent possible. This system of internal controls should be formally adopted by the board and appropriate to the size of the organization's resources.

Budgeting

A budget serves as an association's financial plan for carrying out its mission. Analyzing income and expenses enables management and the board to make decisions that will maintain the financial health of the association. The board should annually review and approve a detailed written budget of revenues and expenditures and gain a sufficient understanding of the assumptions behind the budget's development. Individuals responsible for an organization's financial reporting should prepare and present to the board consistent, timely and accurate financial reports, at least bimonthly, with comparisons to the organization's budget. The budget also serves as an important internal control.

Regularly comparing the budget with results will point out any irregularities. Any significant differences need to be evaluated and, if necessary, plans should be adjusted to address these differences. If management and the board have limited experience with budgeting and monitoring of results, or if the organization's finances are becoming more complex, an accounting firm with association experience can provide assistance with designing and evaluating a budget and educating staff regarding how to carry out the process.

Financial reporting

In order to make informed decisions, management and board members need detailed financial information. For this, they rely on timely, accurate financial statements such as a balance sheet, statement of activities, cash-flow statement and statement of changes in net assets. Comparing these documents with the budget and with the same documents from the previous year identifies important trends and differences that facilitate important board discussion and decisions. Reliable financial reports also are essential for strategic planning. Association leaders require accurate financial projections to assess the feasibility of planned activities or projects, as well as timely financial information to monitor those strategies.

These same financial statements serve as the basis for external users to understand the financial position of the organization. Typically, there are industry standards to follow when preparing official financial statements as those same standards are applied across the entire nonprofit sector. These standards are what give the individuals outside of the organization a framework for comparing organizations that have similar structures. If staff does not have in-depth understanding of financial statements, management should secure external accounting expertise to prepare financial statements or train staff in preparation and interpretation.

Audits

When it comes to financial transparency and accountability, funders, the government, lenders, suppliers and board members need assurances about the financial information under review. Audited financial statements are one way of providing reassurance of an organization's financial integrity to these stakeholders. Many charitable corporations or similar associations are required by law to have such statements audited or reviewed periodically. In these situations, an association would contract at year-end with an independent professional accountant or accounting firm to examine the organization's financial statements and supporting documents. The accountant would then provide a professional opinion regarding the fairness of the information. The organization's treasurer would review and sign these audited statements along with a formal approval from the board.

It is important to have a strong relationship with the accountant or accounting firm who plan and prepare the financial statements in order to provide accurate interim reports while compiling the appropriate information all throughout the fiscal year.

Taxes

Directors of associations are responsible for ensuring their organizations meet their tax obligations and reporting requirements. Requirements can vary substantially depending upon the complexity of the organization and whether or not it has other special considerations. Most associations, for example, are required to file information returns with the highest-level national regulatory taxing agency and potentially other lower-level forms of local government. If an association has employees, there are also filing requirements and obligations for remitting government source deductions, such as employment insurance, employee income tax deductions and other types of personnel taxes. Normally, taxes are due on a mandated basis set by the regulatory agency. An association's accounting system must be able to support the payment of taxes and submission of reports. Again, if management, staff, or the board do not have the expertise to address these requirements, they should seek professional assistance for preparing returns and assisting with tax planning.

Contracting

If you are an association, you are contracting. You may be contracting for additional services or to determine the market price for a good or service. In all contracts, keeping good records and being able to demonstrate your process to an auditor or board is extremely important. The basic focus of contracting moves in four basic phases:

1. Planning
2. Competing and selecting
3. Writing the contract
4. Deliverables, contract management and results

The contract itself should name the parties in agreement, specify the work to be completed, specify the time required to complete the work and specify the amount of funds the contract commits. Discuss how the contract can be fulfilled or ended against how payments will be made. The contract should include provisions to settle disputes, and it should include the names, titles and dates from those authorized to contract.

Associations have to make purchases and reimbursements. It might be a good idea to provide some written guidance from the board on financial policy, procedures and procurements. There are some businesses where printer toner or cartridges represent a significant expenditure. How are you going to keep the business open? Limits on procurement should be placed on all staff. A volunteer treasurer should occasionally review all expenditures with a special attention to the conduct of financial management by the executive director. Audits should be scheduled as needed under the general accepted strong accounting principles of the host nation. An audit would annually examine records and expenditures for their accuracy and appropriateness. Was a correct market price negotiated? From where are vendors judiciously selected for quality and price?

Business Planning

Use all information available and write a business plan. This plan will detail the steps needed to achieve the association's goals. A business plan is not a strategic plan. A strategic plan can be part of the document, but a business plan gives you context about how you will operate. Here's what a business plan should look like:

- **Executive summary:** This is a short overview of the business plan. This is the mission statement. This is the one-minute explanation used to explain to people what the association is doing.
- **Products and services:** Fill out the type of value the association will create. Besides membership and events, many associations offer training, books or periodicals. If the association is a service provider, write down those services. At the beginning, products and services don't have to be complex. Business plans get updated; update as you grow.
- **Market analysis:** A market analysis is simply a snapshot of what the market looks like — the amount of people the organization could potentially serve and how much those people will spend on membership and services. This should come from an analysis of the environment the association operates within and should take into account the basis of the strategic plan. It explains how the organization will achieve its goals.
- **Marketing plan:** This outlines what activities the association can do to attract members to the organization or users to its services. The plan:
 - Explains who the organization will service
 - Explains how the association will find these people
 - Explains how the association will convince people to support them through promotional campaigns, events, networking, etc.

The First Board Meeting!

It's now time to plan the first official board meeting. Although there likely have been several informal meetings, this is the meeting where the chairperson calls the meeting to order, roll call is taken, notes/minutes are recorded, and business is discussed and voted upon.

Have an agenda and be aware of time needed to complete that agenda, along with other tasks. Chapter 3 discusses board training and other aspects of meetings procedures. During the Board's first, official meeting, members should at least:

- Review and approve the draft of the mission statement and business plan
- Review and approve articles of incorporation
- Review and approve the bylaws
- Review and approve the initial strategic plan document
- Select board officers (president or chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer).

Start-Up Communications

Highlighting quick wins

A strong, new association should promote its quick wins in its early communications efforts. A quick win is a marketing concept that has excellent application to start-ups.

According to the Harvard Business Review, "Among the high-performing new leaders, one attribute stood out: a strong focus on results. In fact, most of them had managed to secure a quick win — a new and visible contribution to the success of the business made early in their tenure."

Gaining a quick win is a great business practice and important for an association. The path to success is wide, but it always includes documenting and communicating accomplishments. A quick win might be a board meeting that resulted in a new decision or a new opportunity. It could be a networking event resulting in a number of new connections. It could be the creation of a first or new national recommendation that improves a process for farmers.

Find wins and push them out to members, media and government. This is what will help your association grow.

How to Start an Association Checklist

- ☐ **Draft initial mission statement:** Draft a brief mission statement that describes the purpose of the new organization. The board should approve it at the first official board meeting.
- ☐ **Recruit initial board members:** If the plan is to incorporate, recruit at least enough board members to meet state/province/federal requirements for a corporate board. If the plan is not to incorporate, consider an informal advisory board to help guide you.
- ☐ **Conduct basic planning:**
 - ☐ Write a business plan, starting from the mission statement
 - ☐ Conduct strategic planning
 - ☐ Make management or organizational plans
 - ☐ Write a communications plan.
- ☐ **Review legal status:**
 - ☐ File Articles of Incorporation.
 - ☐ Establish legal status or tax status.
- ☐ **Get banker and bank account:** Seek a bank that understands the needs of a new, small association. Get a reference from a similar nonprofit.
- ☐ **Start accounting records:** Get an accountant or other finance expert to help set up a basic bookkeeping system for nonprofit corporation. A board treasurer can be very helpful in this regard.
- ☐ **Review liability and insurance needs:** Liability, property and/or other insurance may be necessary. With hired staff an association may need to comply with workers legal requirements, like safety, disability insurance, furlough or firing considerations, worker's financial compensation, health and life insurance benefits, etc.
- ☐ **Draft bylaws:** Some states/provinces/federal levels require bylaws. The board should approve the bylaws. Get samples from a similar nonprofit.
- ☐ **Verify legal status with regulatory officials:** Go back and be sure everything is filed correctly.
- ☐ **Create a financial plan:** Lay out necessary resources and the financial budget to achieve and support those resources.
- ☐ **Start basic communications:** Establish a monthly newsletter. Start using social media.
- ☐ **Plan the first board meeting:** It took many meetings to get here. Now is the time to officially call the group to order, transact business, take notes.

Chapter 2: Strategic Planning for Board Members

Working on and completing a project successfully requires the right tools. For an association to be successful, it must have the right tools in its toolbox. One of the most vital tools for an association is a strategic plan. Not having a strategic plan prepared and readily available would be like trying to build a structure without the proper equipment.

Many organizations, including start-ups, understand what a strategic plan is and go through the process of creating one. However, when they fail to utilize or understand how to use the plan, it's like going to a construction site and leaving a vital tool at home.

Tom Slunecka, Chief Executive Officer of Ag Management Solutions, which works with several agricultural associations, likens a strategic plan to one particular tool: It should be as handy as a scale because, as projects, programs and ideas are brought up throughout the year, they have to be checked against that tool – checked against that strategic plan.

What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is a document that lays out:

- An organization's goals
- The mission or purpose of those goals
- The vision of what those goals look like
- The strategies and actions that will be implemented in order to achieve those goals

Strategic planning is crucial to the effectiveness of an association. A strategic plan gives the organization focus and keeps it on track. Creation of a strategic plan must include every board member, and the plan should give the association's staff and contractors direction and purpose. Without a strategic plan, the organization runs shortsighted, and that can be detrimental to success.

Sticking with the strategic plan is vital. Unlike a business, whose managers get constant, daily – even hourly – information and feedback on sales and production, an association typically runs on its own, ahead of or adjacent to the industry or even the board members themselves. An association's staff and contractors do not have the same ability to flex and pivot like a single business does, in part because they don't have access to immediate authority, information or regular feedback, but also – and perhaps more importantly – because they're working on behalf of the multiple companies and other related entities that the association represents. One might be having a good day, month, or quarter, another may not. An association has to take a longer view, and a strategic plan helps the organization stick with that long view.

Strategic Plan



Creating a Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is tactical. It sets in place the parameters for all the programs run by staff, contractors, and volunteers who set out to achieve an association's goals and objectives. As a result, a strategic plan should be short and concise – it can be as brief as just a single page – so it can be used as that all-important tool in the association's toolbox.

Before an association creates its first strategic plan, its leaders must know and understand their organization. Why does it exist? Who or what is it serving? Make sure these questions are answered by board members. Gather opinions from membership, industry leaders and representatives to figure out those details before putting together the strategic plan.

If one hasn't been done already (or recently), undergo a SWOT analysis as a starting point in the strategic planning process. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats:



- Strengths: What are the things your association does well?
- Weaknesses: Where are the areas in which you need to improve?
- Opportunities: What are the goals you believe you can achieve, and where can the organization deliver the most value?
- Threats: What obstacles stand in the way of your goals or could stand in the way of your progress?

Associations use that intricate and researched base of information to outline the goals and create a strong strategic plan. Strategic planning should also consider and make certain there is diversity in the programming set forth. This is vital to the plan's success to ensure many people's skills, talents, and interests are utilized in its execution.

Setting Goals

An association should set goals that are equipped to achieve based on available resources, whether those resources are financial, human or both. A young association can set itself up for failure by overreaching with its first strategic plan. It is important to understand that a new association takes time to fully form and that strategic planning can be a useful developmental exercise to help the organization grow. A strategic plan should pinpoint what an association's needs are and where the association is going. Although the goals can be big and broad, these are ultimately concrete goals and plans with focus, not just hopes and dreams.

Founded in 2019, the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance has three chief goals in its strategic plan, which set out to increase awareness of U.S.-grown identity preserved (IP) soybeans and specialty grains:

- Marketing: building relationships and brand awareness for IP soybeans and specialty grains.
- Market access: seeking, identifying and removing barriers to IP exports.
- Supply chain: seeking and identifying weaknesses and building and improving constraints and relationships

The No. 1 goal in the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance's three-page strategic plan was to increase awareness of identity-preserved soya and specialty grains grown in the United States. Each goal includes a mission, vision and strategy. Reference Appendix 1.2 for full strategic plan example.



SSGA Goal #2 Market Access

Seek, identify and remove barriers to IP exports. Increase investments in IP and food grade specialty soy and grain marketing

Mission
Build U.S. production and build or grow markets

Vision
(Where we're going)
Become the voice of the IP field crop industry

Strategy
(how we will do it)
Break down barriers add value to members' businesses


- Advance the industry by increasing the competitiveness of IP products in the global marketplace, reducing costs and restrictions on our business.
- Address market access concerns abroad. Tariffs, protections, and policy
- Work to increase awareness of the need among other commodity organizations, business partners, and government for greater investments in projects and providing benefits/efficiency to soya and specialty grains

SPECIALTY SOYA AND GRAINS ALLIANCE

Achieving Results

Once an association’s board of directors adopts a strategic plan, the plan must be utilized and supported by the board. Again, it is the most important tool in the toolbox! It should not be wasted. The strategic plan is the association’s guide, and the board needs to respect the plan and help the organization use it to drive programming and performance by staff and contractors.

A strategic plan should be regularly consulted and reviewed. It would be wise to keep it as an agenda item at each board meeting to review and reaffirm its goals and to use as that scale against which to measure the association’s programs, events, communications and other tasks. Do those items represent the goals the strategic plan laid out? Do they achieve the goals the strategic plan laid out?



Strategic Plan

MSGA is a non-profit, farmer-controlled advocacy organization established in 1962. Its mission is to ensure all Minnesota soybean producers have the ability to farm, today and into the future, by advocating for legislation and policies benefiting those producers.

Mission
(purpose)
Ensure all Minnesota soybean producers have the ability to farm, today and into the future, by advocating for legislation and policies benefiting those producers.

Vision
(where we're going)
Be the premier advocacy and information arm for the Minnesota soybean farmer.

Strategy
(how we will do it)
Build a larger base of support through informed membership, industry partners, effective leadership, and knowledgeable staff.

MSGA Goal #1
Increase MN Soybean's influence, visibility and effectiveness in public policy arenas
Performance Measurements

- Increase organized efforts to pass favorable legislation and PROACTIVELY defend against unfavorable legislation.
- Utilize farmer-leaders and staff as a resource for legislation at both local and state level.
- Play an active role in implementation of law making through increased meetings with law makers and testimony.
- Increase farmer awareness of the political landscape and emerging issues by hosting more meetings and trainings.
- Increase advocacy activity in key legislative districts.
- Increase participation on policy boards
- Expand sphere of influence
- Identify director/investor specialized ag-related interests and encourage advocacy on behalf of agriculture

MSGA Goal #2
Increase revenue annually through investments in the organization
Performance Measurements

- Increase farmer memberships and the promotion of the value the association brings to Minnesota farmers.
- Increase local and national industry partner investments and promote the value the association brings to industry.
- Maximize investment revenue through various MSGA Media and Meetings
- Build resources to litigate if necessary

The strategic plan of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, a nonprofit, farmer-controlled advocacy organization. Refer to Appendix 1.3 for a full strategic plan example.

For example, the strategic plan of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) lists “increasing Minnesota Soybean’s influence, visibility and effectiveness in public policy areas” as one of its core priorities. These principles include organized efforts to pass favorable legislation by playing an active role in implementing laws through meetings with elected officials.

Farm safety being of paramount importance to agriculture associations and a continuing legislative priority for the association, that became an area of focus for MSGA in 2020 based on the association’s strategic plan.

During Minnesota’s 2020 Legislative Session, MSGA responded to an increasing need for expanded resources for on-farm grain bin safety. Throughout the session, MSGA met with legislative leaders and state agency officials to advocate for a voluntary program to help offset costs for farmers to purchase equipment, with a goal toward preventing grain bin accidents. MSGA activated its communication outlets to highlight the need for such a program. MSGA was also intent on urging legislators to refrain from making the program a mandate; MSGA felt forcing farmers to use the program would discourage some producers from participating.

The end result was bipartisan legislative support for a voluntary program that will reimburse farmers up to 75 percent of their costs to purchase the farm safety equipment. It was a win for MSGA and its members and an achievement that stemmed directly from the goals and objectives set into motion by the association’s strategic plan.

The strategic plan can also be used as a tool to set performance goals of the staff to evaluate the performance of the board of directors. If everyone is measured and tested by the same objectives, the likelihood of success is far greater.

A Successful Plan

A strategic plan alone does not do anything. It must be used, consulted and followed by the people working on behalf of the organization. Success in strategic planning will be seen in the accuracy and effectiveness of the programming put in place by the association at the direction set forward by the strategic plan. End-of-the-year successes or end products should align with the strategic plan. That can be anticlimactic. Success does not necessarily come with big fanfare. That’s because successes should be seen clearly within the strategic plan.

Success can be seen in the contentment of the board of directors, as well as the association’s staff and contractors.

For the board, a successful, well-executed strategic plan proves that the organization is important to the directors’ businesses, and they’re happy and willing to invest their time to be part of the organization. For the staff and contractors, understanding the purpose of their work, knowing where they’re going and seeing that the results of their work align with the strategic plan adds to their own contentment. When everyone is pulling in the same direction and they have purpose, they are more likely to be happy to be part of the association and show pride in what they do.

Having a clear strategic plan in place also helps in fundraising and building support for the organization from outside influencers, such as the media.

Avoid chaos

The alternative to successful strategic planning isn't just failure, but chaos. That can occur if:

- A strategic plan is too complex and not understood by staff and contractors
- Goals are set that the association is not equipped to achieve
- A plan is never consulted, reviewed or reaffirmed
- It runs counter to the expectations of the members
- It is adjusted too often – without letting the programs to have a chance to succeed
- The board, after the plan has been ratified, fails to accept the plan or support work toward the plan

Chaos shows up in the form of confused, frustrated, and unmotivated staff and contractors who don't know why they're part of the association; uncommitted board members who don't volunteer their time or show up to or participate in meetings; and negative comments from outside influencers about the organization and the work that it's doing.

Failures in strategic planning also occurs when an association fails to prepare, including failing to consider unexpected events that cause dramatic shifts in the industry. While it was difficult to predict something like the 2020 global coronavirus pandemic, associations can, and should, discuss events that could cause disruptions, such as extreme or disastrous weather events or trade problems like tariffs and other regulatory issues.

While it is not worth the time to create a plan for every possible negative influence, it is vital that the board, staff, and contractors know and understand that major, unforeseen events can and do happen and that adjustments can and will be made proactively. This will help to assure a sense of calm across the organization. Knowing that an association can work together to reach its goals, no matter the circumstance, will strengthen the fabric of the organization.

Chapter 3: Board Training

Board members of an association have overall responsibility of the activities and create a sustainable future for the organization. To develop board members and become a volunteer-driven association, an organization must discover the interests and areas in which board members will thrive. This chapter will identify ways to discover these interests and how to recruit board members, board member responsibilities, board member preparation and board member training.

Recruiting Board Members

When starting an association, a board of directors must be established to help manage and set direction for the association. Generally, between 12 and 17 directors is large enough to allow for diversity, yet small enough to accomplish great things. An odd number of members is best to avoid a tie vote. Larger boards struggle to accomplish getting so many people on the same page, and that can be cumbersome.

Depending on the association structure, some examples of how to get board members include:

- **Geographical districts:** This method provides fair, equal representation across the entire region. These regions can be broken up based on acreage, population or other demographics.
- **Business type:** Including two farmers, two feed mill operators, two processors, two distributors and two input providers on the board gives representation to members of all sectors of the industry.
- **Economically driven:** Organizing the board based on the gross revenue of a business is an alternative way to include business of all sizes, while giving voice based on the size of the individual organization. In addition, organizing a board based on how much money a business puts into the association is also a way to structure the board.
- **Election by members:** Finally, one of the most common ways to structure the board is based solely on an election with the board of directors being chosen by association members through a ballot process.

Board members should come from diverse backgrounds with various skill sets, experiences and expertise. Board members with connections to various industries or key players within an association's industry will help create a diverse board that will help grow the association. If all board members have the same mindset, the association may have limited growth and success.

To ensure an association's board of directors is diverse, identify individuals with diverse backgrounds who would be a good fit for board positions and extend personal invitations. Explain why their skills are needed, and discuss ways directors can help to improve the association. Current board members should help recruit new board members. Creating job descriptions for board members will lay out expectations and expected time commitments.

Find interests of board members

Understanding board members interests is key to harnessing the potential of the association's board. A simple survey to members to discover interests, skill sets and experiences is helpful. Personality tests can also provide valuable insight for determining interests. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator is a worldwide personality test that uncovers strengths and weaknesses in a 93-question assessment. Uncovering areas of interests, as well as strengths and weaknesses, will help properly assign board members to committees or leadership positions in the association.

Establishing Committees

Establish committees or action teams to focus on smaller subsets of an association's business. The members of these teams become subject-matter experts and provide recommendations to the full board for review. Examples of committees include:

- Governance
- Communications
- Policy
- Audit/Finance
- Focus Areas within an association (i.e. Research, Market Development, Product Development or whatever areas of focus fit the association's strategic plan)

Policy and Procedure Manual

A policy and procedure manual outlines all rules and instructions relevant to board members of the association. This manual can help explain the role and responsibilities of board members and should include the following contents:

- Association mission
- Board of directors listing terms and officers
- Employee roles
- Board roles of responsibilities
- Rules
- Board Officer Election Policies
- Other association policies, such as Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest, Harassment, Confidentiality, Communications and Travel Expense Reimbursements

All board members should be given a copy of the manual at board member training to keep in their possession for future reference. Board member training is explained later in this chapter. An example of a full policy manual is found in Appendix 1.4.



Leadership Positions

Determining interests of board members gives leaders the best chance to grow and thrive. Officer positions include:

- President/Chair
- Vice President/Vice Chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary

Each position has unique roles and responsibilities.

The president – or chair – serves as the chief elected officer of the association, presiding over all meetings or designating a person to do so. This position interfaces with the chief staff officer (typically an executive director) and leads performance reviews of the (1) board and (2) chief staff officer. The president appoints committees in accordance with bylaws.

Policy & Procedure Manual

The vice president – or vice chair – serves in the absence of the president/chairman and performs such duties as identified in the bylaws or assigned by the president.

A treasurer oversees all funds and financial records. This position prepares an annual budget for approval and keeps records of all income and expenses. The treasurer is responsible for filings required by law associated with finances and performs such duties as identified in the bylaws or assigned by the president

The secretary oversees the custody of all corporate records, except financial records, and monitors the accuracy and timely distribution of meeting minutes. The secretary performs such duties as identified in the bylaws or assigned by the president and often serve as chair of a bylaws committee.

Responsibilities of All Board Members

All board members are responsible for the following duties:

- Determining and understanding the association's mission and purpose
- Selecting the executive director
- Supporting the executive director and assess his or her performance (All staff and contractors are the responsibility of the executive director.)
- Ensuring organizational planning and goal setting
- Managing the association's resources
- Determining, monitoring and strengthening programs and services for the association
- Promoting the association's image
- Ensuring legal and ethical integrity in the association
- Helping recruit new leaders
- Assessing and measuring organizational performance

An association should set a variety of guidelines to ensure board members are following legal considerations and managing risk. Board members should follow legal considerations by understanding three duties:

- Duty of care: ensures good business judgment at all times and uses due diligence in decision making
- Duty of loyalty: states that board members should avoid conflicts of interest
- Duty of obedience: ensures that a board member remains faithful to the mission and goals and follows the governing documents.

An association can manage risk by understanding local laws regarding each board member's personal liability as it relates to their board service. Common insurance coverages include general liability, covering property damage, directors and officers liability (D&O), and covering the actions of the leadership (for example, antitrust violations, wrongful hiring, etc.).

Meeting Preparation

The secretary should distribute a notice with the meeting agenda and materials, such as minutes from the last meeting and financial documents, well in advance of the meeting. All board members must review the agenda and materials to prepare for participation in board discussions. Whenever possible, board members should formulate and ask questions before the meeting.

An agenda is prepared by the chief elected officer, with input from staff, and with consideration of current issues, member needs and pending business. Input from board members for agenda items should be provided to the executive director well in advance of the meeting. A sample meeting agenda is found in Appendix 1.5.

Minutes are a legal record of the decisions made during the meeting. Minutes are not a play-by-play record of conversations or a reminder document for leaders and staff. If audio recordings are taken during the meeting, the recordings should be destroyed once the minutes are approved at the next convened meeting of the board.

To maintain order at board meetings, a board of directors should choose a formal meeting procedure and structure to follow that includes the rules of order, or parliamentary procedure, to abide by. This helps a board accomplish tasks in an orderly manner. One example of these meeting procedures is Robert's Rules of Order. The board of directors should learn the basics of the rules of order to be sure motions and procedures are understood and followed at all meetings.

A board should also determine its own rules to conduct board business in a professional, respectful and efficient manner. Examples of these rules could include:

- Respect the individual and his or her perspective.
- Share opinions, ideas and information in an honest and constructive manner.
- Reach consensus, understand and accept decisions even if you do not agree.
- Respect each other's time, be prepared and call for the question.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Be approachable.
- Publicly promote and support one another.
- Keep disagreements or private matters within the team.
- Have a spirit of inquiry – ask questions to clarify.
- Do not obstruct other's creativity or ideas.

Training Board Members

When an individual joins the board, welcome them successfully by sharing detailed information about the association and explain the following items:

- Organization mission, vision, strategy
- Strategic plan
- Bylaws and other governing documents
- Board policies – have board members sign a commitment to uphold those policies
- Financial situation
- Introductions to other board members (either in-person or via biographies)
- Job descriptions and expectations of board members
- Procedures used for expenses and how they are reimbursed
- Calendar of events for the coming year

Holding a communications training for board members can help them understand the association and guidelines each must follow. Communications training can also describe how to explain the association in a few sentences, sometimes known as an “elevator speech.”

All members of an association should be able to answer the question, “What does your association do?” in 30-60 seconds. Imagine stepping onto an elevator when a fellow rider asks about your association. You must quickly explain the association before you exit the elevator at your destination. This short speech can be an effective way to network and gain interest in your association in a social setting.

To craft an effective elevator speech, explain the problem the association solves and who is represented in the association. The speech should explain the value of the association as well as any progress or successes. The goal of an elevator speech is not to convey every detail about the association but to spark interest and make connections.

Similar strategies can be followed when explaining the value proposition of the association. A value proposition should explain how the association adds value to its industry and/or audience. Chapter 7 explains more about an association's value proposition.

To protect the reputation of an association and its members, a set of guidelines needs to be instituted for board members to follow when communicating about the association. An explanation of these guidelines needs to be presented at board training and made readily available to all board members. Some sample guidelines and considerations are as follows:

- Board members should only act on behalf of the association when consulting other board members or staff; doing otherwise can harm the individual's and the association's reputation.
- Board members should only engage in communications with other organizations or associations when expressly given the direction to do so from the board.
- Board members should discuss with staff any communications requests from other associations or organizations or from the industry at large. If this is not possible, the board member should alert staff as soon as possible afterward.
- All requests for media interviews should be directed to staff. A staff member will schedule the interview and provide talking points as appropriate. This guideline includes reoccurring interviews on the same topic.
- When communicating to others about the association, a board member should disclose his or her affiliation. A board member should not use his or her affiliation to speak about non-association business.
- Always assume anything said will be interpreted as a representation of the association.
- Only make official statements on behalf of the association when instructed to do so.
- Never disclose personal opinions of board decisions, investments or other dealings, including to members, media, other associations or other public organizations.
- Never say anything that will cost the association its ability to keep customers or vendors or tarnish its credibility in the agriculture community.

After discussing the policies of the association, board members should acknowledge the receipt of the policy manual and disclose any conflicts of interest. It is best to do this annually.

Board members have the duty to lead and create a sustainable future for an association. To develop a successful association, board members must understand and feel confident in their roles. By defining roles, setting expectations and guidelines, and conducting a comprehensive board training, an association and its board members can thrive and reach its goals.

Chapter 4: Membership Development, Structures and Engagement

Membership programs are essential to all associations. For many associations, membership support is the backbone of the association. Not only can building and maintaining membership increase networking capabilities, membership also helps other members by encouraging them to commit to a program in order to accomplish and execute a set of association goals. A robust membership program can bring both critical financial resources to the association and increased support to its members. For some associations, membership fees are a funding lifeblood; without members, the association may become unsustainable. The work to grow and maintain a membership program can bring a wide range of valuable resources to all members, as it enables opportunities to bring in different insights to the association to help accomplish common goals.

The capability to bring members together can be both challenging and rewarding. An association needs to find – and clearly explain – the value of having a membership program and show others the importance of the association, revealing why it “pays” to join. Aside from individual membership, some associations will need to establish a corporate membership/sponsorship program, which may work better depending on their structure and goals. In some cases, a combination of the two will need to be developed into the membership program.

The capability to have individuals and corporations working in tandem can establish a work-together method that will help benefit both individuals and larger companies. Membership in an association ensures there is safety in numbers and everyone is equally invested in the association’s core mission. This can be accomplished through a variety of crucial steps.

Develop a System

The logistics of running a membership program include: building a list, organizing a membership drive, responding to membership contributions, reaching out to members and potential members, and maintaining the membership program. A system capable to handle all this is necessary for a successful membership program.

Choose a Coordinator

The demands of a successful membership program will typically call for a full-time coordinator position who is vested in the association. Because membership is so vital to an association’s health, a staff or volunteer position pertaining to membership shouldn’t be overlooked.

A robust, sustainable membership program requires someone to tend to the day-to-day details. The membership coordinator should be an organized professional devoted to sustaining and growing membership. This role is ideal for a point-person capable of answering all questions pertaining to membership and ensuring the program is meeting its timelines and goals. Any membership recruitment drive should revolve around – and be organized by – the coordinator.

Coordinator duties may include (but aren’t limited to):

- Maintaining active/expired member lists
- Contacting active/potential members via email, regular mail, phone calls or in-person meetings
- Stuffing and sorting mailings (brochures, mailers, letters, etc.)
- Program maintenance
- Organizing meetings with board members involved in membership

Decide on Target Groups

Decide on target-specific groups that have similar values and issues relating to the work of the association. For example, if the association is a farmer trade group, aim to contact farmers and all those who work with farmers in the community – from banks, to equipment sales and services companies and employees. Find individuals who are passionate about their careers and are looking to help make a difference in the industry. Highlight and promote these members to your larger audience in the form of profiles in publications, company website posts, social media, etc. These individuals will help drive membership, volunteer on the county (“cluster”) board and fight for industry issues.

Promote Your Membership Campaign

Crafting the best strategy to promote the association’s message to potential members is vital to developing membership. First, you will need to create a prospect list. Depending upon the type of association that is created, it is important to find prospects who may find value in the organization. Upon development of the list, it is important to know where prospects will find news and information. From there, utilize these platforms to connect with potential members. Some forms of interaction for a membership campaign may be mail, newspapers and social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Utilizing these platforms, make sure the association is being precise and cohesive about its messaging. Help potential members see the value of joining and what they are gaining from joining the membership program. Some members, however, may respond to more personal, direct face-to-face recruiting style, or traditional mail.

You can also recruit by using your board members and current members. This method can be beneficial to increase your membership numbers. Set up a membership drive with certain criteria that needs to be met for each member, such as “must be a three-year new member,” and the recruiter who gained the most members wins.

Challenge association board members to help recruit their contacts to become members. Have a membership drive. Offer an incentive for the board member who recruits the most members, awarding a prize or an article written about them and their work to share with their communities. For example, The Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, an advocacy group overseen by Ag Management Solutions, offered a weekend getaway trip to a hotel and an evening dinner for its top membership recruiters as an incentive. This contest brought a competitive – but friendly – spirit to recruiting efforts.

Hold events to merge members with potential members. These events could involve a trade show, which can utilize member and non-member engagement, offering opportunities for potential members to talk to current members. Events can be social, too, such as a golf tournament.

Devise a Fee Schedule

Setting membership fees depends upon who the target members are. Associations may have a different set of fees for different types of membership. For example, industry members may have to pay more than an individual who does not necessarily work for a company (a farmer, for example). Making membership available to the largest number of people makes the most sense financially, as it will enable the ability to have successful annual membership campaigns.

Membership dollars need to help finance the activities of the association, so fees should be set accordingly. However, an association’s membership has to be weighed by cost and benefit. An association needs to ask itself, “Is there more value having higher dues and fewer members or lower dues and more members?” Remember, members can be community supporters as advocates, as a political base or as a source of volunteers and board members.

Membership should not take a one-size-fits-all approach. Charging a membership fee that seems too high, may drive potential members away. Associations must be able to explain their fees to potential members to help them understand how they are used. What return on investment is the association providing? Providing value to one's membership by what your organization accomplishes for the member needs to be at the forefront of the decision when setting your fees. Do your fees cover the associations monetary needs?

The price of annual membership may be connected to something you offer to members as well. Offering discounts to area businesses that will help the member is a great benefit. This can be used to get more business memberships as well.

Membership fees can – and should – vary, offer flexibility and have different levels, such as:

- 1-year memberships vs. 3-year memberships
- Automatic renewal discounts by signing up with a credit card and agreeing to automatic annual renewal
- Business accounts vs. individual accounts
- Discounted rates for retirees or younger members
- Special rates for electronic-only members

Membership can also include different benefits. For example, a 3-year membership may include a free business listing in a member directory whereas a 1-year membership would not. Will they receive a discount to a local store or a shirt with the association's name and logo on it? Will they have the availability to work with other members? Highlight these benefits to both current and potential members.

<p>Name: _____ Date of Birth: ____/____/____</p> <p>Farm/Company Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ County: _____</p> <p>Email:* _____ Phone:* _____ Cell: _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 Year Membership: \$250 (includes Minnesota Soybean long sleeve pullover) Pullover size (circle one): S M L XL XXL XXXL</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 Year Membership: \$120</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes I want to save \$20! 1 Year Membership: \$100 (with auto renew payment via credit card). By checking this option, I understand my annual membership to MSGA will renew automatically, charging the credit card on file at the time my membership expires.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Young Professional (age 35 and under) & Retired: \$70/year</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Student (age 22 and under): \$20/year</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I'm a new member <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing member ID#: _____ Recruiter Name: _____</p>	<p>Payment information.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check Enclosed (payable to MSGA)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> CC: (VISA/MASTER/DISC/AMEX)</p> <p>Card #: _____</p> <p>Exp. Date (M/Y): ____/____</p> <p>CVV: _____</p> <p>Signature: _____</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Minnesota Soybean Growers Association 151 Saint Andrews Court Suite 710 Mankato, MN 56001 507-388-1635 Online application also available at mnsoybean.org/msga/invest</p> </div>
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An example of an association's membership form. Additional membership form examples are included in Appendix 1.6.

Contacting Potential Members.

When contacting potential members, a targeted and well-constructed campaign is necessary. Campaigns may include (but not be limited to):

- Personal letters
- Personal phone calls.
- Community meetings about your association

- Individual face-to-face meetings
- Trade shows
- Events to bring people together to learn about your organization



The Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) is the nation's premier soybean association because farmers and agri-businesses recognize the value their investment in MSGA brings. Here are two examples of Minnesota members who actively promote Minnesota's soybean industry.



Jeremy Tischer

Jeremy Tischer, a third-generation farmer from Breckenridge, grows a variety of crops, including corn, soybeans, sugar beets and spring wheat.

Living just outside the Fargo/Moorhead area, Tischer saw the disconnect consumers had from the farm. He took initiative to join the Clay/Wilkin County Corn and Soybean Growers Board, and currently serves as chair.

"Over the years we have done different outreach projects," Tischer says. "We want consumers to know if you are putting fuel in whether it is biodiesel or gasoline with ethanol, you are consuming the products we are raising."

Tischer decided to become a member of MSGA because he believed the organization would make a difference on his farm.

"Soy is here to stay, and you need a voice," Tischer says.

"You need a voice nationally and you need a voice at the state level. Overall, we want people to know we are here and we matter."

Tischer encourages others to see the value in joining MSGA.

"Numbers speak. The more people who are active, the more it matters," Tischer says.



Brad Verly

Brad Verly grew up on a farm just south of Marshall, where his father and uncle farm together. He left the farm to study accounting at St. John's University and then worked in Minneapolis for three years.

"I decided I wanted to be closer to the farm to get more involved," Verly says.

Verly worked at a CPA firm for about three years, and then took a position at Minnesota West Community and Technical College where he currently is a farm business management instructor. Verly assists farmers in their day-to-day operations and helps with anything financial, whether it is helping figure out their profitability, cost of production or analyzing their different fields and crops.

Verly joined the Lyon County Corn and Soybean Growers Board because he wanted to have a stake in an industry that's vital to his community.

"I think it's important (to become a MSGA member) because what we do whether it is directly in production or a related agricultural field, it is all tied together, and I think all of our successes are intertwined," Verly says. "We need to work together to have our industry be successful."

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The Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) features two members in its bi-monthly magazine Soybean Business. The feature highlights the members' farm, family, hobbies and why they find membership in MSGA important.

Sending regular mailers to current members and prospective members can also prove beneficial. Members want to feel included in the latest news and developments with the association; they do not want their only contact with the association to only be when their membership is expiring. This can be achieved through mailers – both electronic and paper – highlighting the latest developments and news within the association, along with return on investments and easy directions on how to join. The association will have to measure the cost of mailers vs. the benefits of increasing membership. A sample mailer is included in Appendix 1.7.

Compile, Transmit and Distribute the Membership Package

As people/businesses decide to enroll as members, send them thank-you letters and explain in specific detail how/why/when their membership dollars are helping with the efforts of the association. The letter should come from the association's leadership with actual signatures on the letter for a personalized touch. The letter should include their contact information so the member can reach out to them if necessary. The package should include any discount coupons, codes and any items member may receive as a benefit.

Use current farmer members to contact other farmers to become members (for example, the regional "clusters" of farmers in Cambodia) by traveling to their areas.

Maintaining Membership

Maintain the program, through list management. Put together – and continue to add to – a list of potential members. Once you have run a successful membership campaign, you will have to do it again the next year – and the next, and the next – as you continue to expand your list in hopes of increasing membership and income each time. Membership levels can drop for a variety of reasons – many of them economic – but an association that rests on its laurels and fails to stay in contact with members is a surefire way to lose members. Members can tend to have an attitude of, "What have you done for me lately?" so keeping the lines of communication open with members is a must. Maintaining the program over time takes organization and effort and is just as important to success as the things you do during the membership drive.

Keep building the list. Continuing to add to the list of potential and current members should be a constant activity. Anyone the organization has contact with should be added to the list, and people within the association should be encouraged to think of others who could be added to it. If it seems possible, another route is to ask members to either suggest names or to contact friends and ask them to join as well.

Keep the list up to date. You should manage a membership list continually. Duplicates and people whose names have been on the list too long without a response from them should be removed, along with those who have passed away.

Building a membership list and keeping it up to date sounds like a straightforward, simple task. Don't be fooled; it isn't. It is also important to the membership mission. Doing it right requires almost daily checking and updating. Once you get behind, it is incredibly hard to catch up. It requires a very high level of organization, constant vigilance and a near-obsessive attention to detail. It is a great job for a volunteer or board member who gets real satisfaction from keeping things in order.

A list can be kept on a standard computer database, like Microsoft Access or Lotus Approach. There is, however, software specifically designed for fundraising to organize membership lists in a number of ways. If you choose to use a standard database, you can create computer-generated personalized mailings through the mail-merge function of your word processor.

Engage Your Membership

Engaging your membership at all levels will be important to the success of your membership base. Members may want different options for engagement based on their interests and topics important to them.

Some options for industry-level engagement may be:

- Speaking as a panelist at conferences and events
- Speaking to the board of directors
- Serving on the board or other committees
- Sponsorship and ability to take part in certain events

Some options for individual-level engagement may be:

- Trade shows, conferences or other events
- Ability to serve on committees
- Fundraising events
- Networking opportunities with other members or industry partners

Engaging your membership base will help ensure members continue to renew, and your association will grow and remain relevant to your mission and purpose.

Sample event agendas and promotions are included in Appendix 1.8.

The Bottom Line

Recruiting and maintaining members is often an uphill climb for associations. There can be a prevailing sense among non-members: “You’re going to do this work with or without me, so why should I bother joining?” These are, of course, misguided thoughts, and that is where the hard work begins for an association. It is incumbent upon the association’s membership team to appeal to emotions and impress upon members why/how/when it’s beneficial to join and to emphasize that, as an association with a common bond, “We’re all in this together.”



To accomplish this task, the association must speak with one voice. There are no quick fixes. Building a membership foundation takes time. The rewards, however, validate the resources and effort it takes for membership in an association grow and prosper.

Chapter 5: Communications

For any business or organization to be effective and grow, communication strategy plays a vital role in the process. Building an association is no different. A sound communication strategy allows an association to tap into its members, potential industry partners, thought leaders and influencers, the media, potential sponsors and the public at large. Depending on the core mission of an association, additional audiences may be available, and strong communications platforms will be needed to reach all of these audiences. Building a successful communications program takes time and dedication, but with a few tools in place, it can grow the association exponentially.

Good Communication Starts Internally

Association staff and those who promote the association need tools to best reach a variety of audiences. This path can become more complex as the association grows. Starting out, the simplest thing an association can do is define who it needs to communicate with and how best to communicate with those audiences. However, a good communications strategy starts from within. Staff and those people volunteering or contracted on behalf of the association need to understand how to speak about the organization. Well-prepared staff provide:

- A strong, unified voice on behalf of the association
- General knowledge about the association and its activities
- Knowledge about the industry and the association represents
- A flow of information back to other staff and association leaders learned from others outside of the organization

Ultimately, staff, volunteers and contractors serve as representatives of the association's brand. These people need to believe in the work they do and the work the association does. If staff, volunteers and other stakeholders are not communicated to, they will lack the knowledge to effectively communicate with audiences, the passion to draw people into the association's messages and the ability to share important information back to the association from the field.

Who is the Audience?

Defining the audience of an association is an important first step. In the case of the Cambodian Aquaculture Association, there could be many stakeholders. There are the farmers and producers who raise the fish and the processors, sellers, buyers and shippers of the product. Who eats the end product? Who sells the fish to the customer? Additionally, there are people who regulate the industry. All associations can expect to communicate to the following:

- Members
- Board of directors
- Staff
- Media
- Industry stakeholders/potential members
- Regulators or those who influence regulations
- Businesses within the association's models

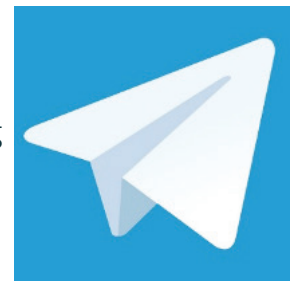
All of these groups are audiences, and all have special needs. The best strategy an organization can make is to group similar audiences together and determine each audience's importance. Staff should be asking questions such as:

- How does the audience help achieve the association's mission and strategic plan?
- Is the audience a strategic partner?
- Does the audience have the potential to be member?
- Does the audience have easy access to technology?
- How does the audience receive its news?
- What does the audience need from the association?

Not all audiences will be equal. When determining the needs, staff should have a clearer picture of how to reach the audience and what communication tools and messages will help engage each audience.

We Know Our Audience, Now What?

Start communicating! Of course, it is never that simple. The tools an association chooses to communicate with an audience will also dictate what type of messaging the audience will receive. For example, the Cambodian Aquaculture Association (CAA) have a connectivity hurdle throughout the country and region, so CAA relies on mobile apps such as Telegram, which boasts that its free service works in even the worst areas for mobile reception.



Understanding Telegram, or other services that work well within a specific region, allows an association to better harness the power of available communication services. Using Telegram, CAA has the ability to send large files to large groups of people. This means CAA can create content, messages and stories internally and push to predetermined groups, giving the association a powerful tool without draining finances that can be used elsewhere in the association.

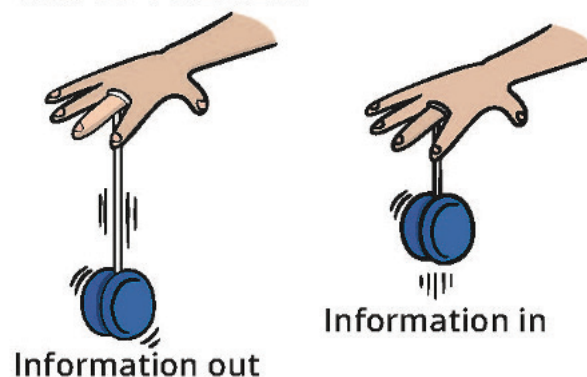
Pictures Tell Stories

Not all communications will be suitable for the digital world. Every audience is going to have different levels of education, meaning every audience will need multiple forms of communications (i.e., newsletters, social media posts, blogs, vlogs, infographics, videos, animations, oral). One way to consistently communicate with audiences of all types of education levels is through visuals. Consider this: The human brain processes images 60,000 times faster than text, and 90 percent of the information transmitted to the brain is visual. What can we learn from this? Using images to help share the messages of the association, especially in regions where written messages might be hard to understand, confusing or misunderstood, has to be a core element of the association's communication strategy.

Field Staff Are Vital

Another way help tell the story of an association is by having field staff communicate an association's message in-person with key audiences. Personalized visits to members, farmers and producers can go a long way and can alleviate any gaps in the communication chain, such as a portion of an audience with below-average reading skills. This might not be achievable early in an association's existence, but as the association grows, field staff become critical to communication efforts.

THE YO-YO EFFECT



Think of field staff like a yo-yo. Every time they go out, they come back full of information, giving the association an insight into the industry. What struggles are its members facing? What support is needed to grow the industry for members, potential members, stakeholders and others? This back-and-forth of information will gain speed the more people learn about the association and become engaged in its mission.

Digital Headquarters

Today's world is built around the internet. Whether or not the world's infrastructure can provide access to the internet is another question. Regardless, an association has to establish a digital headquarters, which is its website. Websites do not have to be complex or expensive. Websites need to deliver information to all the audiences and be the place where people seek out information.

Since connectivity can be an issue, it is important for an association to understand how to be utilize a tool that may not reach all of its audiences. Some things to consider are:

- **Mobile responsiveness:** Can people access the website easily via a mobile device?
- **Loading speed:** What types of content can be added that are low in file size and easy to load?
- **Association news:** Is the news content in a prominent place on the website? Does it show visitors what the association does, what its mission is, and who its members are?
- **Membership:** Can members easily find tools to renew and understand benefits of membership?
- **Technical information:** Does the website provide enough information to be the best source of information for its industry? Does it help the association's core members be better at their trade?

Everything completed in external communications, regardless of audience, needs to point back to a single source, the digital headquarters. As noted earlier, not all forms of communication will get to every level of each audience. This does not mean an association should not communicate to the highest level, nor should it ignore opportunities in the region and world. The website needs to hold all the tools for any audience, and communications need to drive the audience to the website.

Media Relations

How does an association get noticed by media when media practices vary so widely from country to country and region to region? In the case of the Cambodian Aquaculture Association, media relations may seem impossible due to limited media, some of which is government run. Associations facing similar situations need to step back and evaluate all ways in which digital communications can supplement the lack of local media.

Are there bloggers in the region writing about aquaculture? Are there food bloggers writing about the health benefits of eating fish? Are there experts communicating to members of the industry? Are there social media influencers followed in the region?

Communications do not have to be local. A good story can transcend local media, and in some cases, bypass it all together and proving the association is doing work that is making a difference in its industry. If an association knows of a regulation that is hindering its producers from getting feed for their livestock, and it works with local and government officials to eliminate or ease that regulation, the impact likely goes beyond the country's borders. Do neighboring countries have better media access? Do the stories have regional appeal to international publications with regional worldly news?

These are tough questions that sometimes lack easy answers. Field staff can help determine if there are local community leaders who have the respect of their peers. Perhaps these local leaders can become surrogate media, and field reps deliver information to these leaders to share in their communities.

There is no one right way to communicate with the association's audiences. The only thing an association can do wrong is fail to communicate at all.

The Age of Social Media

Social media has to be considered, regardless of country or region. While social media may not play a huge role for an association in the most rural parts of a country where connectivity is an issue, it still has an important role to play.

Social media allows an association the ability to control its news and to make it available to the world. Additionally, social media provides associations with the ability to monitor how people talk about the association's trade. Consider the struggles of limited media opportunities for CAA. What if instead of concentrating on local journalists and media outlets, CAA posted stories and directed those stories at media, bloggers, vloggers, magazines and niche publications or at other social influencers? This dynamic allows an association to transcend local limitations and reach a greater regional and global audience.

Social media isn't simply about reaching people who help share an association's message. In the social realm, an association has a chance to do something critical to its mission: Connect with people. At the core of all communications is people. Human beings have thoughts and emotions, are innovators, are leaders, are laborers, are mothers, fathers, sons, daughters. Humans have stories, and it is in those stories that connections can be made and relationships can be built. The best social media accounts engage people at the human level and connect with the audience by using videos, images and words to tell a story.

Momentum is Everything

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make sound? That age-old question defines which direction an association will go in its development. If an association is doing important work on behalf of its members and the trade industry, and the association isn't telling anyone about it, how does anyone know the work is important or that the association brings value to members? How an association builds value is to tell its story every chance and everywhere it can. This is the most cost-effective way to earn people's attention.

Every association story should strive to:

- Promote the work of the association
- Show a return on members' investment in the association
- Show how an association has improved the industry
- Show how an association's work has made members more profitable?
- Showed how an association has brought awareness to industry challenges
- Promote its members and the impact a member has on the industry or association
- Be the No. 1 source of information for the industry

The Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) features two members in its bi-monthly magazine Soybean Business. The feature highlights the member's farm, family, hobbies and why they find membership in MSGA important.



Minnesota is the only state in the country to support organized corn and soybean counties. Each year, these 44 grassroots counties, each led by farmer volunteers, use checkoff dollars to promote agriculture in their communities - from parades to educational initiatives to biodiesel promotions. We take a look back at the highlights from the past several months of county promotions throughout Minnesota.

Around the Counties: Southwestern Minnesota

In April, the **Rock County Corn and Soybean Growers** collaborated with Luxem's Take 16 Brewery to host a 'Farm to Pint' event with all proceeds donated to the local backpack program. In total, with matching funds, the Rock County Corn and Soybean Growers donated \$4,000 to the backpack program to help provide meals to area students in need.

With a burgeoning agricultural program at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) in Marshall, each year the **Lyon County Corn and Soybean Growers** host an Ag Bowl celebration that includes a football game dedicated to agriculture in the fall and a FFA Scholarship make event in the spring. The Lyon County Growers continue to sponsor the event, this year taking it to the next level. Farmers headed an educational booth promoting corn and soybeans to nearly 300 FFA members and handed out promotional supplies to 200 football visitors, all while raising awareness of the agricultural industry.

Farm safety continues to be a top priority and the **Murray County Corn and Soybean Growers** are doing their part to share that message. Coordinating with area businesses and events, Murray County developed a farm safety trailer that travels to events throughout southwest Minnesota.

Building a communications team takes time. Associations have to invest in staff. Financially challenged associations can still be strong communicators when they hire professional staff to help guide the way. In time, as the association grows, investments in paid advertisements, such as advertorials or sponsored content, can help drive key messages and place the association in front of new audiences.

The most important thing to remember when communicating is about people. We do not talk to a wall and get a two-sided conversation. We talk to people. Learn the audience. Learn who they are, what they care about and how they help the association and then start communicating to them through media channels that best fit them.

Chapter 6: Managing the Interface Between Government and Industry

Organizational Hierarchy

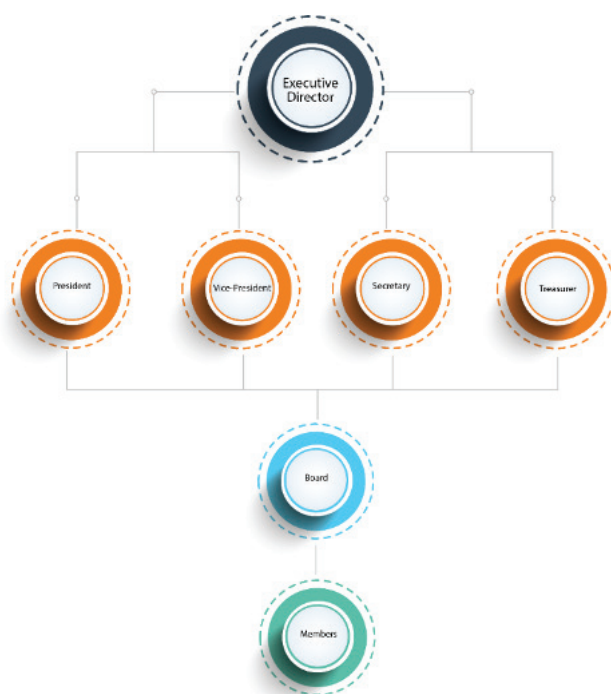
Being mindful of the power structure of an association is an important first step in the process of executing the strategic plan. The ultimate decision-making body of an organization is the board. The board of directors sets the tone for the association. A board may have subsets such as an executive team or governing board authorized to carry out some functions. As learned in Chapter 3, the board hires an executive director who will implement and articulate the vision of the board. The executive director, depending on budget, may be authorized to hire other staff or contractors to help carry out the association's mission. The executive director handles staffing and contractors without interference of the board. This keeps the chain of command direct and focused. The board directs the executive director, while the executive director oversees the other staff and contractors.

The association board should have its own hierarchy as well electing officer positions. Some boards will bestow a title on their lead officer such as president, chairperson, board chair or any other title they desire. This lead position calls the meeting to order, directs the meetings and generally serves as the spokesperson for the board as a whole. There are duties that every board member has to the association. The first of these is the duty of care. Board members need to ensure wise use of the association's resources. They should set the budget and closely monitor the assets and financial wellbeing of the association.

Second, the board has a duty of loyalty. The individual board members may not always agree on every vote; but once the majority has spoken, it is incumbent upon the board members to accept the vote, especially if they are speaking publicly on the board's behalf. The board members must keep the best interests of the association in the highest regard and speak with a unified voice. Additionally, board members must recognize and disclose conflicts of interest they may have outside of the board. Disclosing conflicts of interest allows the board to make decisions that are in the best interest of the association and not in the individual board member's best interest.

Finally, the board members have a duty of obedience. The board must ensure that the board itself obeys applicable laws and regulations, including the association's own governing documents. The board is responsible for making sure the association sticks to its own purpose and goals.

The executive director has similar duties owed to the organization. Unlike the board, however, that person is not in charge of setting the direction. That is the board's responsibility. The executive director answers to the board, carries out the board's mission and is in charge of overseeing the daily operation of the association. The executive director ensures employees are following all appropriate laws and completely their work efficiently. It is the executive director's job to closely monitor the budget to ensure it stays within what is authorized by the board, or request that the board amend the budget if need be.



Accomplishing the Strategic Plan

The board has set its long-term goals in the strategic plan. These goals are generally complex, ambitious and not easily accomplished, particularly in the short term. To accomplish these goals, it is vital for the board, executive director and other staff to work as a coordinated team to earn smaller, short-term goals. The board needs to be informed of realistic prospects for achieving the agenda; projected resource requirements; anticipated supportive or conflicting issues raised by other interests; and the potential long-term impact of the agenda on the association's image and credibility within the political and social arenas.

A key element in working this process is correctly identifying the varying issues the members of the organization face. For example, the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA), a nonpartisan advocacy group managed by Ag Management Solutions, undergoes a grassroots process that begins with 44 smaller county soybean grower boards across Minnesota. Each county selects one soybean farmer to sit on the full MSGA board to represent that area at the state level. By recruiting producers from individual counties, the larger state board is able to develop and groom the next wave of young leaders. Each county board works in its own area on local problems and then submits resolutions to the state organization to handle issues that are bigger or too complex for the local board to handle. These issues can deal with industry practices, individual corporations, statewide regulations or laws, all the way up to federal and international issues. Each resolution is reviewed to ensure it meets the mission of the organization and fits in the strategic plan. It is then brought to a meeting of the board to ensure once again it fits with the association's mission. Finally, the whole document is deliberated and voted on by the membership of MSGA at its annual meeting. This process allows even the smallest counties to bring concerns to the board and have a meaningful voice in the association.

Affecting Change

The grassroots process is essential in affecting change for growers. Any one single grower may not have the position, power, or voice to change a barrier that many growers face. By banding together in a larger association, the members increase their power and profile with larger entities. Individual growers from varying counties submit resolutions on the same topic. Discussions regarding these issues can lead to statewide practices that industry either needs to accept, or work with, the organization to change. For example, one county put forward a resolution calling for new regulations that would reduce property tax to build a school by 30% and another called for a 70% reduction. The difference was debated at a meeting of the board and the executive director informed the board that a 70% reduction was unlikely to be accepted by state regulators. Tax consultants were hired by the board and suggested a goal of a 40% reduction. That new resolution was then adopted by the board. The executive director of MSGA, working with political advisors and the communications staff, was successful in getting property tax reductions of 30% in year one and 40% in subsequent years.

Individually, the farmers would not have the political influence and knowledge to affect this change. It is only working in a large group with the executive director and other experts that the goal was accomplished. By creating an annual process where resolutions are submitted, debated, and finally adopted by the board, the organization creates a system to identify hurdles that can be dismantled.



Having a good working relationship with government, corporate and industry officials is key to building standards and reducing hurdles. By identifying individual members who have the best relationships, either through their relationships as customers, neighbors, constituents, classmates, etc., you put the association in the best position to succeed. If the individual coming to a company asking for a better price is a loyal customer of a competitor, the door likely will be closed quickly. If, however, producers are having a problem with an individual equipment manufacturer, sending in someone who buys multiple pieces of equipment from the company will lead to a more fruitful meeting. Identifying and cultivating these relationships is time consuming; associations need to take a patient approach and play the long game. It may take many trips to a politician's office with a local farmer to talk about issues before they come to trust the association as a reliable source of information.

Another key in affecting change is a solid communications team that can articulate the association's vision through print, radio and digital media. Many of the politicians, transportation companies, shipping agents, and other officials an association meets with likely have limited information about the issues being faced by the association, industry and its members. It is the communication team's responsibility to produce – and distribute – easily digestible information about the association in short, one page “white papers” or brochures (placed in professional folders) about issues and priorities key to delivering the group's message after meetings and conversations have concluded. After meeting with elected officials and other government decision-makers and/or industry leaders, follow-up with an email or letter expressing thanks and gratitude for the visit, and continue to keep the lines of communication open for future visits.

Knowing Your Audience and Using Their Language

All politics, it's been said, is local. Trade associations, particularly those involved in agriculture, can benefit greatly from tapping into the grassroots energy at the local level. County boards, or “clusters,” can serve as fertile ground for movements and calls to action. Often times, policy priorities are born at the local – not state or federal – levels. Successful associations can channel and harness the local energy and create change at the state and federal levels in the way of policy and regulatory actions. When associations tap into their membership base at the local level, they are able to glean a ground-level look at the diverse priorities and initiatives held by producers.

An association benefits from employing county – or cluster – field communicators who can listen to the concerns of local producers. These communication professionals can act as a bridge, relaying the local message to leaders at the state and federal levels. These local individuals can cultivate the types of relationships described above. As they get to know a local official or corporate representative, the local representative better understands their concerns. Associations can run into many thorny issues where it seems a local official may be opposed to what the group is attempting to accomplish.

Some government decision-makers, depending on their party loyalty or the district they serve, may have negative opinions of an association's industry. These decision-makers are constantly attempting to pass bans against practices or products within an industry. These decision-makers generally do not want to hear about the benefits to an association's membership or to its industry. In the case of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, the message is changed to show how a certain farm practice benefits all of Minnesota, not just soybean farmers. Associations should ask: How does the change in a product or a best management practice impact people outside of the industry? Hopefully, some easy answers will rise to the top. For example, if the association's members lose out on a particular practice and water quality will decrease, more than just members would be impacted. Find ways to get around government decision-makers biases, but do so in a respectful manner. Statements and language that raise tensions is counterproductive to accomplishing the association's goals. Always keep conversations civil and calm.

Dirty Work

Like it or not, government is a constant presence in the life of any trade association and its members. Being present in this arena is critical to the success of the association's industry. If you do not have a seat at the table, you are liable to be on the menu, so to speak.

The association is charged with understanding and managing the interface between government and its industry. That interface does not stop at the legislature. Relationships must be cultivated and nurtured. Governmental bureaucracies have as great of an impact on an industry as the governing body and are often more difficult to deal with. Educational institutions also play a very large role in an industry's growth.

Both bureaucracies and educational institutions often lack responsiveness to an industry. They do, however, have a common Achilles' heel: they must be responsive to government decision-makers. Therefore, government affairs specialists often have unique ways to bring a positive result for associations far beyond the halls of capitols. Effective governmental representation must also include involvement in regulatory and educational arenas as well as country or region's governmental process.

Effective representation of an association in governmental affairs is an ongoing, fluid process. It involves long-term strategic planning and ongoing communication with government decision-makers, bureaucrats, educational institutions and other affected groups. Most importantly, effective representation involves interaction and education of association members so that they can become more skilled influencers of the governmental factors affecting their bottom lines.

10 Rules on Influencing Decision Makers

1. Do not be intimidated by government decision-makers. An effective association will make a plan and work with those decision-makers to enact change.
2. Never guess who is a friend or who is an enemy. Have tough conversations, even with your opponents.
3. Do not assume decision-makers know much about a subject. Keep it simple.
4. Knowledge is power. Be prepared. Educate yourself before educating others.
5. Make the case. Request action. Follow up.
6. The race goes to those who show up, so show up often.
7. Be aware of personal pride and tread lightly. Better to let a decision-maker take the glory and accomplish your goal than to try to grab the credit and fail.
8. Use any and all legal influence and relationships.
9. Be willing to compromise. Even small wins are wins.
10. Accept that politics equals debate and controversy

Chapter 7: Understanding the Association and its Value

An association is only as good as the product, service and value it provides the industry. The value of the organization comes directly from the creation of a SWOT analysis and strategic plan outlined in Chapter 2 of this Toolkit. Assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement and threats of the association guides the association to determine the goals that help achieve success. The SWOT analysis and strategic plan will provide insight into the tools the association may need to determine the success of the association.

Three likely scenarios that associations encounter surrounding the value of their association involve:

1. The people who make up the association's membership base
2. The products the association offers
3. The influence the association has over key groups

Understand the Value of People

The people within an association's membership base might be the most important asset to an association. A member's experiences, willingness to serve and volunteer, and network and knowledge can be a great benefit to an association. Using the people within an association's membership base to create value comes with challenges and opportunities.

Knowing the value of an association's membership base can be done in a variety of ways:

- Conducting personality tests programs such as StrengthsFinder, Myers Briggs, Emotional Quotient Inventory or others. These profiles can provide individualized reports outlining strengths, communication styles, conflict-management preferences and working habits that will help the association learn more about the members they are working with. These profiles can assist an association in choosing roles for their members as well as assignments for committees and boards.
- Understanding members' engagement levels and interest in taking on roles within the association is important. Encouraging members to utilize their knowledge and interests will make it easier for associations to know the value they have in certain areas important to your association.

As part of its formation in 2019, the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance (SSGA) analyzed the people in the organization and placed them into appropriate committees. One of SSGA's committees is focused on addressing and solving container-shipping issues worldwide. Naturally, container-shipping organizations lead that team. Like-minded people began working together to influence a segment of industry important to them, while providing value to the organization.

The people who make up an association can provide value by speaking on behalf and serving as the face for an association. Training on public speaking, media interviews, key talking points and more is a necessary element of utilizing the people within an association. The people of your association need to be seen as experts and the voice of the industry. Understanding strengths and personalities is an important part of understanding what roles members will have as experts of the association.

Engaging leaders within the association will help support its goals outlined in the strategic plan. Activating these leaders by attending industry events, coordinating media visits and outreach efforts help the association's leaders stay engaged. Similar to the organization as a whole, action team members are engaged by developing a SWOT analysis for the team or committee, creating goals and managing a budget. Engage action team members by allowing each member a voice on a topic important to them. Each of these action teams will act as a subset of the organization and are an important part of providing value to a specific sector of the industry.

Unengaged members leave associations because they do not see value in what they, or the association, are doing. Implementing a program that locates and engages the right people in an association will help guide the goals developed to produce value. Continued development of members through trainings, learning sessions and member-to-member engagement is important. Guide each member toward the goals of the organization. Develop members into industry experts to ensure the association becomes the preferred choice when seeking information related to your mission.

Creating Value with Your Products

Developing an association's product through certifications, development of a quality brand and product education create value for an association.

Developing a certification process for an association's members is crucial. The certification allows a process for members to obtain training and to clearly implement precise benchmarks to achieve. Certification programs typically cover core areas such as:

- Training
- Auditing
- Processes for improvement and adjustments
- Certification
- Ongoing training and continuing education

Some examples of certification programs include:

- Pork Quality Assurance (U.S. National Pork Checkoff)
- Beef Quality Assurance (U.S. National Beef Checkoff)
- Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (Minnesota Department of Agriculture)





In the case of the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program, this voluntary program is centered on providing sustainability practices important to water quality; however, it offers value for the farmers who choose certification in three ways:

- **Regulatory certainty:** Certified producers are deemed to be in compliance with any new water quality rules or laws during the period of certification.
- **Recognition:** Certified producers may use their status to promote their business as protective of water quality.
- **Priority for technical assistance:** Producers seeking certification can obtain specially designated technical and financial assistance to implement practices that promote water quality.

Certification often leads to the formation of a brand that is easily recognized by a consumer for a variety of purposes, including but not limited to:

- Product quality
- Traceability
- Farmer connection

The Certified Angus Beef brand was created to help beef farmers across the United States mark their product with a well-known brand to raise consumer trust in their product. They created a certification in which beef on market shelves must grade at Choice or Premium standard as outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), then pass 10 standards for flavor, tenderness and juiciness. Once passing all of these requirements, the beef is labeled as Certified Angus Beef. Viewed by consumers to be some of the best beef on the market, this beef is sold at a premium price because of its quality brand label. As the Cambodia Aquaculture Alliance (CAA) is looking to develop the industry, developing the product into a well-known, accepted and desired product by consumers will allow the association to provide immense value to the product and its members.

Product quality may be shown by offering a free product or sample service to bring your association's product/service to light. For instance, the Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council (MSR&PC) provides product samples cooked in high-oleic soybean oil during a farm show to increase brand and product awareness while providing an opportunity to try the product firsthand. To further enhance and drive its message home, MSR&PC includes signage about the use and benefits of high-oleic soybean oil for the customer's awareness.

Product education can vary from pamphlets, in-store signage or trips to the association member's businesses to gain firsthand knowledge.

For example, MSR&PC conducts a "See For Yourself" trip where it takes checkoff-paying soybean farmers on a domestic or international trip. This provides an opportunity for Minnesota soybean farmers to learn about how their checkoff dollars are used. Taking this same concept and inviting key influencers, consumers and government officials to learn first-hand from association members could provide tremendous value to an organization and could serve as a qualitative measure of success for the association.



Consumer preferences may heavily influence where you focus the association's time. Establishing trust in your association's product with consumers can be done in a variety of ways including:

- Farm tours
- Meet-a-farmer events
- Festival and market stands
- Grocery store meet and greets
- Cooking demonstrations

Direct farmer interaction is one of the most powerful ways to influence consumers. For the CAA, engaging farmers and processors in one-on-one meetings with government decision-makers and consumers provides a direct link from the farm to the decision-maker. Bringing farmers on a trip to share what they learned within their communities provides an organic learning opportunity for peers.

Connecting farmer leaders with university researchers allows producers to receive recommendations directly important to their farms. The most trust comes from people who do the work, so engaging the farmers with those who make decisions increases the association's value.

Creating Value as Industry Influencers

Influencing the industry through media opportunities, product demonstrations/giveaways and "See For Yourself" experiences help guide people toward learning more about an association's goals. Local and regional news outlets and social media are some of the easiest ways to share the association's message. Utilizing trained board members and seeking out opportunities to get them in front of a camera or microphone to share your mission will raise awareness to who you are or what you do.

Influencing the industry at all levels in and out of the supply chain shows your value as an association. We recommend:

- Identifying individuals who are already trained and can instantly serve as influencers for the association and the industry. Influencers can be found on social media, within pre-existing trading partners or other technical and government officials.
- Establishing a contact list of influencers and engaging those influencers in the work the association is doing while figuring out how sharing its message is mutually beneficial to both the audience and platform along with the association.
- Provide key influencers with the technical, social and industry-focused materials needed to share the association's message with key audiences.

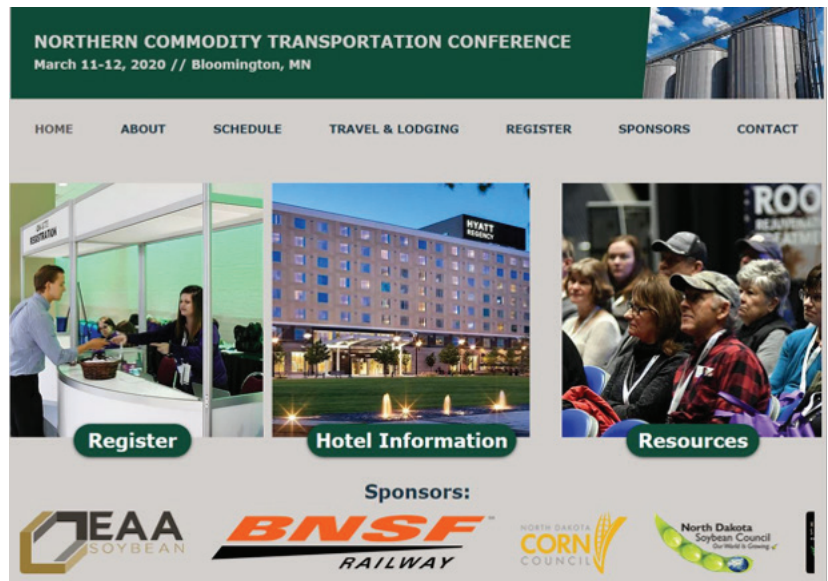
Technical materials provide influencers with the who, what and why of the industry. For example, the Northern Crops Institute (NCI) in Fargo, North Dakota, develops technical materials for influencers across the world. Recently, NCI worked with industry experts, including farmers, university researchers and nutritionists to update the Full Fat Soybean Meal Handbook. This handbook outlines how soybeans are raised, the importance of full-fat soybean meal in livestock rations and the nutritional and economic impact it provides producers and supply chain businesses. The Cambodia Aquaculture Association could develop a similar handbook that outlines how fish are raised, the importance of the aquaculture industry and the nutritional impact it has on the consumer. Providing a similar handbook to influencers allows them to understand the association's entire message while working to craft messaging for its followers.

Influencers need the proper tools to ensure the association's messaging stays consistent. Having the communications team create sample social media posts or develop press releases that can be personalized to a specific area of the country and generate news coverage about the industry is what helps develop the association's brand and influence consumers. For example, every year, the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) organizes its annual meeting and agricultural exposition, which attracts farmers and

agricultural influencers from across the state. For this specific event, farmers are the key influencers engaging others to attend the event. MSGA's communications team develops sample social media posts farmers can share on their personal page. The team also develops a press release that outlines quotes from different farmers that can be personalized to each region of the state. In addition, MSGA farmer leaders from the region are interviewed by local media to resonate with viewers. This encourages influencers to lead the effort in a specific region, but still follow the organizations key value messages.

Associations need to activate its influencers. Activating influencers can be done via online media outlets, bringing influencers to events or through one-on-one meetings. For an upcoming event, providing influencers with the necessary materials to promote the event, either via a social media page or other communications channels, is an easy way to raise awareness. In addition, if board members are adequately trained, an association can use its website to promote completed interviews, showing a larger audience the value the association provides.

Outside of media, bringing influencers together can be the force needed to make changes in the industry. For example, in March 2020, Ag Management Solutions (AMS) identified a need in the industry to talk about transportation issues related to agriculture. AMS developed the Northern Commodity Transportation Conference (NCTC) and brought together influencers related to agriculture transportation to one location to share ideas and collaborate on potential solutions. AMS hosted the event, ensured the right people were invited to participate in the conversations and promoted the event through media outlets to continue influencing target audiences. AMS established itself as an industry leader by activating influencers at all levels as it brought farmers, government officials and industry experts together into one room for a common goal.



Events such as NCTC can also be completed on a smaller scale, similar to what MSGA does with its Day on the Hill meetings with state government officials. MSGA staff sets up meetings with legislators, trains farmer leaders on key messages through talking points and creates leave-behind materials that stay with the legislators. These small, one-on-one meetings between farmers and their elected officials allow the farmers to educate legislators on issues important to the soybean industry and association while allowing the government representative to ask the farmers questions for clarification. Although this is a key event for influencing the industry, it is also engaging the board to display the value of the association and activating government influencers to learn more about the association and what it does for its members.

Listing the values the association has provided the industry up to this point can aid in others buying into what the association offers. Every association needs early wins to show value, but strategizing how to utilize those early wins to keep moving forward sets the tone for the future. The board is only as good as the information provided. Sharing what the association has offered the industry and the association's impact helps gain support through potential revenue streams and financial contributions. Remember: The association's value will have a direct correlation in revenue streams from membership dues, corporate sponsorships, events and more. Continuing to activate the board and staff help the association continue to bring value to the industry and secure financial contributions to continue industry development.

An association has to provide value to be successful. In order to grow membership numbers, corporate sponsorships and awareness, the value an association creates is what determines its success. A SWOT analysis and strategic plan create the goals that generate value. Activating board members, influencers and industry representatives to realize the value is how the association will be successful. A successful association will harness the value of a SWOT analysis and strategic plan to set goals, establish value and drive toward future success.

Appendix 1.1

SSGA Executive Director Job Description

Reports to:

Employment Status: Regular Full Time

Last Revision Date:

POSITION SUMMARY

Under the general direction of the executive committee of the board of directors, [association name] the Executive Director is responsible for the overall administration and management, including program creation and execution, revenue development and business operations. Areas of responsibility include strategic board development and execution as directed by board of directors, board meeting planning, program evaluation, policy development, public relations, personnel and fiscal management.

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Serve as lead staff, responsible for analyzing trends and position the organization to grow and thrive on a national level.
- Lead a strategic process, planning and ensure continued progress toward achieving strategic objectives through effective performance measurements.
- Oversee policy development, programs, services and activities in market development, promotions, communications, issues management/analysis and education to ensure organizational goals are met.
- Establish positive relationships and communicate effectively and collaboratively with other organizations that promote the viability and profitability of the industry.
- Lead efforts to create new alliances, partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and all groups that work similarly in the market.
- Oversee acquisition, retention and maintenance of members. Focus on planning and conducting member involvement programs.
- Manage financial, operational and administrative activities for the Boards, while ensuring integrity and compliance on all management activities.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- [insert education required]
- [insert work experience required]
- [insert language or cultural knowledge required]
- Demonstrated comprehensive working knowledge of strategy development and planning.
- Possess an understanding of market development, promotions, and communications.
- Demonstrated ability to build and maintain a collaborative team environment, working closely with the board, contractors and volunteers at all levels.
- Knowledge of policy processes related to the industry
- Strong written and oral communication skills with internal and external audiences.
- Ability to supervise, direct, motivate and evaluate staff performance Available to work evenings and weekends as job requires, frequent travel (if required provide content)

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions include a normal office environment as well as intrastate, interstate and international travel. *This Job Description is only a summary of the typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks and duties. Employees may be asked to perform other duties, as assigned.*

Administrative Assistant

Job Description

Reports to:

Employment Status: Regular Full Time

Last Revision Date:

POSITION SUMMARY

Under the supervision of the Executive Director, the Administrative Assistant performs a variety of administrative, financial and clerical tasks ensuring the efficient and smooth day-to-day operation of our office. Duties of the Administrative Assistant include providing support to our program directors, assisting in daily office needs and managing our company's general administrative and financial activities.

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Assist with clerical and/or financial tasks to enhance their program goals
 - Schedule meetings and appointments
 - Make travel and meeting arrangements
 - Write, proofread and/or distribute emails, letters and other correspondence
 - Assist in the preparation of reports and meeting materials
 - Create and maintain electronic and physical filing systems
 - Organize, inventory and maintain promotional material storage areas
 - Support financial cash, ledger, and reconciliation procedures
 - Greet and assist visitors as they arrive
 - Answer and direct phone calls or emails
- Assist with mailroom/copy room activities
- Maintain database records for directors, contacts, mailing lists and historical data
- Assist with processing of new and renewing memberships
- Assist with daily office upkeep and organization including overall office, kitchen, boardroom, basement, and storage areas; vacuum and dust as necessary; Assist with the overall organization and stocking of all storage areas
- Assist with logistics for onsite and off-site events

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- [insert education required]
- [insert work experience required]
- [insert language or cultural knowledge required]
- Proficiency in MS Office products, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook, data base entry and report writing
- Excellent customer service, interpersonal and communication skills, both verbally and in writing.
- Ability to stand and mobilize for prolonged periods of time and ability to lift and carry 25 pounds occasionally

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions are normal for an office environment. *This Job Description is only a summary of the typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks and duties. Employees may be asked to perform other duties, as assigned.*

Communications Specialist

Job Description

Reports to:

Employment Status: Regular Full Time

Last Revision Date:

POSITION SUMMARY

Communications Program

Reporting directly to the Executive Director the Communications Specialist works to create and implement effective internal and external communication strategies.

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Execute an aggressive, proactive communications program that will include:
 - Communications
 - Serve as primary communications staff
 - Write and edit all press releases and media content
 - Create and maintain editorial calendar
 - Assist on implementation of programs and grants
 - Manage the gathering and dissemination of news content across all media channels, social, digital, and paper.
 - Oversee and manage communication monitoring tools
 - Assists or maintains content creation of websites
 - Creates deliverables to ensure communication goals are met.
 - Provide communication support to all staff and Board of Directors for external communications including letters, speeches, discussion documents, and policy explanations.
 - Publications
 - Assist with copy layout, content sourcing, editing and writing.
 - Assist in developing and maintaining a editorial calendar

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- [insert education required]
- [insert work experience required]
- [insert language or cultural knowledge required]
- A working knowledge of and passion for modern agriculture. Strong writing skills, media savvy.
- Highly motivated, innovative, organized, accurate, detail oriented with strong written and oral communication skills
- Must demonstrate sound, independent judgment.
- Ability to plan, organize, direct and coordinate program activities and manage multiple projects, programs and contractors.
- Available to work a flexible schedule, including some evenings and weekends as job requires.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions include in-office, remote work and extensive travel, including some overnight travel. *This Job Description is only a summary of the typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks and duties. Employee may be asked to perform other duties, as assigned.*

Program Manager – Analysis

Job Description

Reports to:

Employment Status: Regular Full Time

Last Revision Date:

POSITION SUMMARY

Reporting to the Executive Director, the Program Manager – Analysis oversees and implements a strategic data, research and educational effort to improve association member profitability and provide high level policy and content advice to the Director, Board, and members.

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Use data, research, and knowledge to develop high level analyses that provides insights into the major initiatives and areas of interest for the association. Reports may be written, presented orally. Data may be presented graphically.
- Coordinate the activities of the member association with respect to data needs, reports, and policy.
- Works closely with team members to assure programs are aligned with organizational strategic plan
- Coordinate with research universities, international organizations, and private information sources.
- Secure co-funding for select research projects or programs by writing grants, requests for proposals, and letters of funding.
- Work with staff to communicate research or data outcomes
- Develop strong relationships with consultants and ag commodity groups
- Provide technical expertise as requested
- Provide training as requested
- Organize and speak publicly about research and data to message about the association
- Develop and implement a program to seek input on statewide soybean research needs from farmers, ag industry and academia.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- [insert education required]
- [insert work experience required]
- [insert language or cultural knowledge required]
- Highly skilled data and research analytical skills. The ability to synthesize sometime conflicting data into actionable work by the association.
- Highly motivated, organized, accurate, detail oriented with strong written and oral communication skills; excellent public relations skills, with evidence of ability to work and communicate with diverse people to ensure effective internal and external relationships
- Ability to plan, organize, direct and coordinate program activities and manage multiple projects, programs and contractors
- Available to work evenings and weekends as job requires, extensive travel (30%+) intrastate, and interstate and furnish own transportation for reimbursement of expenses at established rate

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions include in-office, remote work and travel, including overnight travel. *This Job Description is only a summary of the typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks and duties. Employee may be asked to perform other duties, as assigned.*

Project Manager Job Description

Reports to:

Employment Status: Regular Full Time

Last Revision Date:

POSITION SUMMARY

[NOTE: Program managers in associations implement programs and policies. These categories of employees are often created to address a specific locale or segment of the association's business. The description is for a territory manager. It is easily adapted to the subject matter responsibilities by listing out the subject matter area]

The Project Manager works directly with association members and office/staff to create a comprehensive strategy at the assigned territory [or subject matter area] with a focus on priorities to improve the profitability of members. The incumbent will promote, facilitate and execute specific programs.

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Serve as the primary resource and contact person for the assigned region [or specified subject]
 - Assist the members of the association in the region access the programs and policies available to improve their businesses.
 - Manage and develop relationships for communications, membership and outreach
 - Determine appropriate elements (advertising, trade shows, social media, etc.) of program to promote the work of the association.
 - Develop news articles, press releases, and talking points about their region [or program]
 - Help to identify and recruit people to participate in events and the association. Develop relationships with key influencers and others within assigned territory.
 - Provide appropriate analysis on critical and long-term issues affecting producers within assigned territory.
 - Increase membership within assigned territory [or within subject program area].
- Promote, facilitate and execute programs in the areas of agronomics, environmental, market development and new uses within the association's expertise.
- Have a detailed understanding and implications of regional, national, and global issues affecting producers and effectively relay information to producers when appropriate.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- [insert education required]
- [insert work experience required]
- [insert language or cultural knowledge required]
- A working knowledge of and passion for modern agriculture and awareness of issues that affect profitable farming.
- Strong writing skills, media savvy.
- Ability to manage time effectively, work independently, and exercise good, sound judgment via remote supervision. Must be a self-starter.
- Must demonstrate sound, independent judgment.
- Ability to plan, organize, direct and coordinate program activities and manage multiple projects, programs and contractors.
- Available to work a flexible schedule, including evenings and weekends.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions include in-office, remote work and extensive travel, including some overnight travel. *This Job Description is only a summary of the typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks and duties. Employees may be asked to perform other duties, as assigned.*

Financial or Operations Specialist

Job Description

Reports to:

Employment Status: Regular Full Time

Last Revision Date:

POSITION SUMMARY

Under the supervision of the Executive Director, the Financial/Operations accurately completes accounting, finance and record-keeping tasks as they pertain to the association. The incumbent is responsible for financial functions including but not limited to the following areas: A/P, A/R, Banking/General Ledger, Monthly Reporting/Accruals, Grant Accounting and Other Duties. *This employee works closely with the Association Secretary/Treasurer.*

PRIMARY DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Accounts Payable (A/P):

- Oversee accounts payable process to ensure accurate coding and approval process for all bills, expense reports (board, director, staff, and credit cards) and check requests.
- Review purchase journals and process all check runs.
- Reconcile project-billing accounts to vendor reports.
- Maintain filing and accounting system updates for all vendors and applicable records

Accounts Receivable (A/R):

- Assign proper general ledger code and record bank deposits into accounting system.
- Maintain filing and accounting system updates for all customers and applicable records.
- Review all invoicing and other A/R entries for accuracy prior to entry.
- Perform receipt collection duties

Banking/General Ledger

- Initiate account transfers.
- Post necessary general journal entries.
- Reconcile all cash, asset and liability accounts on a monthly basis

Monthly Reporting/Accruals

- Maintain and distribute monthly internal reports including AR/AP Aging, contract progress and other ad-hoc reports
- Maintain asset and depreciation schedule and post monthly entries
- Generate reports as requested by the Director or Board.

Grant Accounting

- Provide basic financial oversight for funded projects
- Monitor expenses for allowable uses for government and other grant funding sources
- Provide resources in obtaining new grant opportunities

Other Duties

- Point person for travel, contracts, and procurement questions
- Organizes travel, contracts, and procurement as needed.
- Oversee first purchaser collections process and annual compliance reviews.
- Assists with year-end audit preparation, annual first purchaser compliance reviews and any other activities deemed necessary to help the finance department function optimally.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- [insert education required]
- [insert work experience required]
- [insert language or cultural knowledge required]
- [insert specialized professional licenses, recognitions, or trainings required in accounting/finance.]
- Demonstrated experience and knowledge of accounting, travel, contract, or procurement rules and regulations, policies and procedures.
- Knowledge and experience with MS Office products and accounting software.
- Highly motivated, organized, accurate and detail oriented.
- Effectively communicate with all levels of staff and the Board of Directors.
- Ability to work both individually and in team setting while managing multiple projects and programs.
- Available to work evenings and weekends as job requires.
- Maintain confidential/sensitive information.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working conditions include normal office environment. *This Job Description is only a summary of the typical functions of the job, not an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all possible job responsibilities, tasks and duties. Employees may be asked to perform other duties, as assigned.*

Appendix 1.2



SSGA Goal #1 Marketing

Build relationships & brand awareness for IP Soybeans and Specialty Grains

Mission (purpose)

Accelerate purchases of U.S. IP soybeans and specialty grains globally

Vision

(Where we're going)
Add value to IP growers and food manufacturers in the United States.

Strategy (how we will do it)

Increase brand awareness through promotion, education and relationship building

- Ensure we are addressing the three legs of the SSGA stool, food grade soya, specialty grains and transportation. Relying on Action Teams to direct activity.
- Identify and introduce products to new markets, recapture lost markets and increase sales to existing markets
- Make available a customized, virtual website portal and database for the represented companies and their current and potential international customers
- Communicate with those respective international customers in a way that mirrors the cultural, political and social expectations of the countries in which they reside
- Enhance and strengthen the trade servicing mechanism that helps connect buyers and sellers, to focus attention and resources keenly on the markets for specialty field crops.
- Grow the perception of USA as a choice origin for IP
- Assist relationship building through the Global Trade Exchange. Develop and lead trade missions and QSP/ATP, and other grants, activities to ensure price elasticity and long-term customer loyalty;

SPECIALTY SOYA AND GRAINS ALLIANCE



SSGA Goal #2 Market Access

Seek, identify and remove barriers to IP exports. Increase investments in IP and food grade specialty soy and grain marketing

Mission

Build U.S. production and build or grow markets

Vision

(Where we're going)
Become the voice of the IP field crop industry

Strategy

(how we will do it)
Break down barriers add value to members' businesses

- Advance the industry by increasing the competitiveness of IP products in the global marketplace, reducing costs and restrictions on our business.
- Address market access concerns abroad. Tariffs, protections, and policy
- Work to increase awareness of the need among other commodity organizations, business partners, and government for greater investments in projects and providing benefits/efficiency to soya and specialty grains

SPECIALTY SOYA AND GRAINS ALLIANCE



SSGA Goal #3 Supply Chain

Seek, identify weakness, and build a constantly improving supply chain constraints, and grow personal relationships in those chains from farmers to end users and retailers

Mission (purpose) Build faster, more reliable supply chains, build personal relationships	Vision (Where we're going) Bring focus into rural areas, connecting them worldwide, supporting entrepreneurs	Strategy (how we will do it) Implement activities and use staff to work on resolving weaknesses in the chain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey, prioritize, and improve any supply chain step that must be improved to make the industry more efficient and drive costs down. From farmer, to broker, to transport, to foreign buyer, mechanical and physical Identify and partner with groups and organizations that can help the supply chain improvements. Identify competitive shipping, certification, and containerization issues and make our members more efficient Help the containerization of shipping through establishment of better connection to infrastructure and efficiency. Implement technical services for problem solving to assist competitive shipping. Help establish better, more efficient systems for certification of grains and oilseeds in rural America, creating stronger direct trade connections between rural America and customers abroad Increase the ability for producers to be more successful. Diversify industry by introducing new technologies to the IP value-added soybean industry such as non-biotech high oleic soybeans. 		

SPECIALTY SOYA AND GRAINS ALLIANCE

Appendix 1.3

Strategic Plan



MSGA is a non-profit, farmer-controlled advocacy organization established in 1962. Its mission is to ensure all Minnesota soybean producers have the ability to farm, today and into the future, by advocating for legislation and policies benefiting those producers.

<p>Mission (purpose)</p> <p>Ensure all Minnesota soybean producers have the ability to farm, today and into the future, by advocating for legislation and policies benefiting those producers.</p>	<p>Vision (where we're going)</p> <p>Be the premier advocacy and information arm for the Minnesota soybean farmer.</p>	<p>Strategy (how we will do it)</p> <p>Build a larger base of support through informed membership, industry partners, effective leadership, and knowledgeable staff.</p>
<p>MSGA Goal #1</p> <p>Increase MN Soybean's influence, visibility and effectiveness in public policy arenas</p> <p>Performance Measurements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Increase organized efforts to pass favorable legislation and PROACTIVELY defend against unfavorable legislation. □ Utilize farmer-leaders and staff as a resource for legislation at both local and state level. □ Play an active role in implementation of law making through increased meetings with law makers and testimony. □ Increase farmer awareness of the political landscape and emerging issues by hosting more meetings and trainings. □ Increase advocacy activity in key legislative districts. □ Increase participation on policy boards □ Expand sphere of influence □ Identify director/investor specialized ag-related interests and encourage advocacy on behalf of agriculture 	<p>MSGA Goal #2</p> <p>Increase revenue annually through investments in the organization</p> <p>Performance Measurements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Increase farmer memberships and the promotion of the value the association brings to Minnesota farmers. □ Increase local and national industry partner investments and promote the value the association brings to industry. □ Maximize investment revenue through various MSGA Media and Meetings □ Build resources to litigate if necessary 	

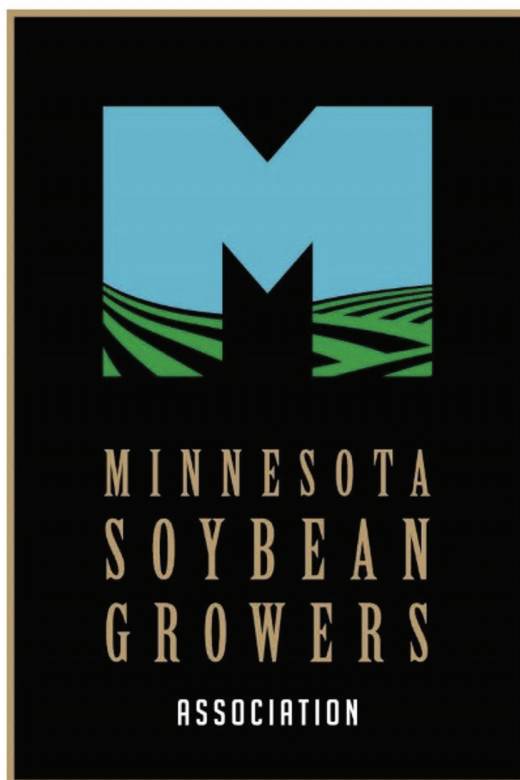
Strategic Plan



MSGA is a non-profit, farmer-controlled advocacy organization established in 1962. Its mission is to ensure all Minnesota soybean producers have the ability to farm, today and into the future, by advocating for legislation and policies benefiting those producers.

<p>Mission (purpose)</p> <p>Ensure all Minnesota soybean producers have the ability to farm, today and into the future, by advocating for legislation and policies benefiting those producers.</p>	<p>Vision (where we're going)</p> <p>Be the premier advocacy and information arm for the Minnesota soybean farmer.</p>	<p>Strategy (how we will do it)</p> <p>Build a larger base of support through informed membership, industry partners, effective leadership, and knowledgeable staff.</p>
<p>MSGA Goal #3</p> <p>Increase the effectiveness of MSGA leadership.</p> <p>Performance Measurements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Increase additional local, state & national representation in and outside of soybean boards/entities □ Create increased opportunities for new director involvement at local/county/state level □ Maintain effectiveness of national leaders □ Development of new leaders derived from opportunities provided by MSGA □ Utilize outside leadership program participants and county board officers in state and program area opportunities throughout the year. 		

POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL



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Policy & Procedure Manual

MISSION:

Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) is a non-profit, farmer-controlled advocacy organization established in 1962. Its mission is to ensure all Minnesota soybean producers have the ability to farm, today and into the future, by advocating for legislation and policies benefiting those producers

Vision:

To be the premier advocacy and information arm for the Minnesota soybean farmer.

Strategy:

To build a larger base of support through informed membership, industry partners, effective leadership, and knowledgeable staff.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, TERMS & OFFICERS

As outlined in Article III of the MSGA Bylaws, the board of directors is comprised of appointments from each organized county, MSGA's elected ASA directors, Minnesota's Young Leader program participants and up to 4 at large directors.

MSGA Officers

Officers are elected annually by the Board of Directors during the June Board Meeting.

Elected June 19, 2019:

➤ President	Jamie Beyer
➤ Vice President	Mike Skaug
➤ Treasurer	Mark Brown
➤ Secretary	Darin Johnson

GOVERNING BOARD

As outlined in Article IV of the MSGA Bylaws, the Governing Board is comprised of 13 members from the board of directors elected annually and includes:

	Elected June 19, 2019:
1. President	Jamie Beyer
2. Vice President	Mike Skaug
3. Treasurer	Mark Brown
4. Secretary	Darin Johnson
5. ASA Director	George Goblish
6. ASA Director	Joel Schreurs
7. AMS Director	Paul Freeman
8. At Large	Trevore Brekken
9. At Large	Brad Hovel
10. At Large	Jim Kukowski
11. At Large	Michael Petefish
12. At Large	Andy Pulk
13. At Large	Bob Worth



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EMPLOYEE ROLES

Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director

Ag Management Solutions, LLC (AMS) will serve as the CEO/Executive Director for MSGA.

AMS staff will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization.

Contact:

Tom Slunecka
Chief Executive Officer
Ag Management Solutions, LLC
O: (507) 388-1635
C: (507) 720-4052
Email: tslunecka@mnssoybean.com

Joe Smentek
Executive Director
Ag Management Solutions, LLC
O: (507) 388-1635
C: (507) 381-6595
Email: jmentek@mnssoybean.com

Chief Financial Officer/Fiscal Agent

Ag Management Solutions, LLC (AMS) serves as the CFO/Fiscal Agent for MSGA.

AMS staff will be responsible for the tasks as outlined in the Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual in Attachment B of this policy manual.

Contact:

Scott Miller
Chief Financial Officer
Ag Management Solutions, LLC
O: (507) 388-1635
C: (507) 381-0562
Email: smiller@mnssoybean.com

BOARD ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The MSGA board develops advocacy and membership programs for the state and works to implement the resolutions, which are approved by delegates at the MSGA Annual Meeting.

Responsibilities of MSGA directors:

- **Serve all of Minnesota's soybean farmers.** As a state director, your top priority is to represent the collective interests of the state's soybean producers and make decisions accordingly.
- **Be informed.** Read Minneline, MinnSoy Voice, Soybean Business magazine, informational e-mails from the state office and visit www.mnssoybean.com on a regular basis.
- **Recruit members for MSGA.** Each state board member is encouraged to recruit a minimum of 7 members each year.
- **Be actively involved in your local county soybean growers association.** A state director is the most important link to the county boards. An MSGA director must bring information to the county and must bring information back from the county to state board meetings.
- **Attend all MSGA Board meetings each year.** If you are unable to attend, contact the MSGA President who can approve/excuse the absence and try to send a county representative in your place.
- **Serve on one MN Soybean committee.** Attend your committee meetings and conference calls.



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- **Attend the MSGA Annual Meeting.** MSGA directors are primarily responsible for the success of this important annual function of the organization. This is where resolutions are brought forward from the grassroots level to set the policy director for MSGA.
- **Get to know the MSR&PC and USB directors.**
- **Maintain an active membership status.** In your leadership role, active membership is required.

RULES OF THE ROAD

MSGA board and staff will abide by these *Rules of the Road* to conduct board business in a professional, respectful and efficient manner.

1. Respect the individual and their perspective
2. Share opinions, ideas and information in an honest and constructive manner
3. Reach consensus, understand and accept decisions even if you do not agree
4. Respect each other's time, be prepared and call for the question
5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood
6. Be approachable
7. Publicly promote and support one another
8. Keep "laundry" within the team
9. Have a spirit of inquiry – ask questions to clarify
10. No fire hoses on sparks of creativity

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

MSGA meetings will be conducted using the Robert's Rules of Order to conduct business in an efficient, clear and orderly manner. Board members can refer to Robert's Rules of Order policies at www.robertsrules.com.

All meetings will be conducted with courtesy and respect.

AFFILIATED COUNTY SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION POLICY

Minimum representation Requirement in order to be considered as an organized county. A county must have a minimum of 30 producers as members of their county organization before they can be recognized as an affiliated county.

A county must have their officers and county board in place, before they can send a MSGA state director to represent their county at state MSGA board meetings.

Voting Policy

MSGA has established and in place a delegate system for voting on state and federal policy issues. The delegate system works as follows:

- a. Each organized county's state director is an automatic voting delegate.
- b. Each county organization is entitled to one voting delegate for being an organized county.
- c. Additional delegates are given to the county but are based on the county's membership as of October 1st of the current year. For every 30 members, the county is allowed one additional voting delegate.



Policy & Procedure Manual

For Example: County A is an organized county with a county board and state director in place and a county membership of 128 members.

* MSGA Director	1 voting delegate
Organized County	1 voting delegate
Membership as of Oct 1 - 128 (128 / 30= 4)	4 voting delegate s
Total:	6 voting delegates for the year

The Delegate Session and Annual Meeting are currently held in January as part of AgExpo.

CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

Introduction

The purpose of this Code of Conduct (“Code”) is to provide all Directors serving on the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) Board of Directors with a commonly understood set of governance principles and better understanding of their responsibilities and the expectations of MSGA for them.

Adherence to This Code of Conduct

Directors shall use this Code to guide them in the performance of their responsibilities as elected and appointed Directors. These were designed to express the basic principles of ethical and professional conduct, and shall not be considered exhaustive or all-inclusive.

The Code of Conduct calls for Directors to make sure their actions meet the highest ethical standards.

A Director who has concerns regarding compliance with this Code should raise those concerns with the President of MSGA, as well as the CEO of Ag Management Solutions, LLC. These individuals will determine what action shall be taken to deal with the concern. In the extreme unlikely event that a waiver of this Code for a Director would be in the best interest of the Board, the full Board may vote on the waiver in Executive Session.

Part One: Ethical Principles

Directors owe **Duty of Care** to MSGA, which requires each Director to act:

- In good faith;
- With the care an ordinary prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances; and
- In a manner the Director reasonably believes to be in the best interest of the MSGA.

Directors owe a **Duty of Loyalty** to MSGA, which requires a Director to act in the best interests of MSGA, rather than in the personal interests of the Director.

Directors shall:

- Act in the best interest of the organization
- Perform his or her duties with honesty
- Do no harm
- Act with integrity



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- Avoid conflicts of interest
- Respect privacy and confidentiality
- Conduct themselves in a professional, courteous and respectful manner

Part Two: Examples of the Practice of the Principles

1. Act in the best interest of the organization

- 1.1. MSGA Directors shall be aware of and uphold the Board's mission statement.
- 1.2. MSGA Directors shall comply with the by-laws and other governance documents of the organization.

2. Perform his or her duties with honesty

- 2.1. Directors shall not withhold information or deliberately misinform or mislead individuals (by providing false or incomplete information, or by lack of providing information) with whom they have contact as a Director representing MSGA.

3. Do No Harm

- 3.1. Directors shall not expose other Directors, producers, members, volunteers or staff to any physical, mental or emotional harm.

4. Act with Integrity

- 4.1. Directors shall work in a spirit of respectful collaboration and cooperation with those with whom they interact, without compromising their personal or professional integrity.
- 4.2. Directors shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion or creed, national origin, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation and related medical conditions), age, marital status, physical or mental disability, veteran status, genetic information (including characteristics and testing), familial status, or sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law .
- 4.3. Directors shall not make derogatory, false, misleading or damaging comments about other Directors, producers, members, volunteers or staff.
- 4.4. Directors may communicate with staff regarding MSGA business; however, directors will at all times be aware that staff reports to the CEO of AMS and will not enter into discussions with staff concerning employee relations, job status, salary levels or management issues.

5. Avoid Conflicts of Interest

The Board of Directors will adopt and regularly evaluate an effective Conflict of Interest policy that:

- Requires directors to act solely in the interests of MSGA without regard to personal interests;
- Includes written procedures for determining whether a relationship, financial interest, or business affiliation results in a conflict of interest; and
- Prescribes a certain course of action in the event a conflict of interest is identified.



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- 5.1. Directors shall sign and comply with the Board's Conflict of Interest policy and conduct all business accordingly.
- 5.2. Directors shall promptly inform the MSGA President if he or she knows or has reason to know that he or she (or a member of his or her immediate family) has any business association, interests (financial or otherwise), or circumstances which conflict with the interests of MSGA that could be considered a Conflict of Interest and/or could reflect poorly on Board actions taken or about to be taken.

6. Respect Privacy and Confidentiality

- 6.1. Directors shall not disclose to any unauthorized person, or use to the disadvantage of MSGA or any of its Directors, producers, members, volunteers or staff, any confidential information concerning MSGA without the permission of the President and shall take reasonable precautions to avoid such information from being disclosed unintentionally.
- 6.2. Directors shall never disclose to public media or otherwise make public any information they have acquired about Directors, producers, members, volunteers or staff in the course of their duties and responsibilities as a Director unless disclosure is both legal, and they have the express permission to disclose. Prior to such allowed disclosure, the Director must first receive written authorization from the President for any disclosure made under this section.

7. Act in a professional, courteous and respectful manner

- 7.1. Directors, when representing or appearing to represent MSGA, shall at all times and in all places act with the utmost dignity to enhance and maintain the respect and reputation of MSGA.
- 7.2. Inappropriate actions, including but not limited to (a) Public displays of inebriation, (b) inappropriate touching, suggestions, innuendo, comments or actions of a sexual nature, or (c) loud or vulgar language toward other Directors or their families, members, producers, volunteers or staff, or the public at large at or during official functions or events will not be tolerated. Any observance or report of such activities or actions is to be brought to the immediate attention of the President.
- 7.3. Directors shall read and comply with MSGA Harassment Policy. Discriminatory practices, harassment (including sexual harassment), or retaliation by any Director or Officer will not be tolerated.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

1. Conflicts of Interest. A potential Conflict of Interest shall exist if a Board member has a relationship, as defined below, with any person who is transacting, has transacted or may transact business with the organization or any of its primary independent contractors. A "Person" includes any natural person and any sole proprietorship, corporation, association, Limited Liability Company, partnership or other legal entity.



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2. **Relationship.** A relationship giving rise to a potential Conflict of Interest exists if a Board member or his or her immediate family:
 - (1) is or has been a director, officer or employee of a Person that has done, is doing, or is proposing to do business with the Board; or
 - (2) is, has been, or will be an owner, partner, member or shareholder of such Person, or receives, has received or may receive any financial or other benefit from such Person or entity.

Board members must disclose all such relationships unless they terminated more than five years prior to completing an initial or subsequent disclosure statement.

For purposes of determining whether a Conflict of Interest exists, immediate family shall include parents, grandparents, siblings, children, grandchildren, spouses, in-laws, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and first cousins and spouses of any of the foregoing. The financial interests or business relationships of such Persons shall be ascribed to the Board member.

3. **Gifts.** Board members may accept personal gifts from Persons transacting business with the Board subject to the following restrictions: A Board member may accept any gift valued at less than \$50 so long as accepting it does not create the appearance of Conflict of Interest. A Board member may accept gifts valued at \$50 but less than \$250 so long as he or she reports such gifts annually. For gifts valued at \$250 or more, a Board member may not accept such a gift without written permission of the MSGA Executive Committee. A gift includes any goods, services, discounts or any other benefit that a Board member receives in exchange for no consideration or less consideration than the value of the benefit given.
4. **Travel and Meals.** Board members may accept meals, lodging, transportation and miscellaneous expenses subject to certain conditions. Meals must be provided in conjunction with working sessions of meetings, conferences or other events directly related to Board business. A Board member may allow direct payment or accept reimbursement for lodging, transportation or miscellaneous expenses in connection with a meeting, conference or other event that the Board member attends as a Board representative to promote the Board's agenda. When accepting meals and other travel related benefits, Board members should attempt to avoid the appearance that they are gaining a financial benefit.
5. **Reporting.** Board members must report all relationships that give rise to a potential Conflict of Interest, all gifts valued at \$50 or more and all travel related payments and reimbursements in their annual disclosure statement. Board members must promptly disclose to the Executive Committee any potential Conflict of Interest regarding any proposed business transaction. The Executive Committee or its designees shall keep confidential all reports and information otherwise disclosed to them.
6. **Review for Conflict of Interests.** The Executive Committee or persons designated by them shall review disclosure statements to determine whether a Conflict of Interest exists. If the Executive Committee or its designees determine that a Conflict exists, the Board member with the Conflict shall be required to recuse himself or herself from participating in, or voting on any matter involving the Conflict. The Executive Committee or its designees may also determine that a Board member has accepted gifts, meals or travel-related benefits that give rise to a Conflict of Interest. In such cases, the Board member may be required to recuse himself or herself from considering any matter involving the Person who



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provided the gift or benefit. The Executive Committee may also require a Board member to return gifts or reimburse a Person for travel-related benefits that create a Conflict of Interest.

Even if no Conflict of Interest is found, Board members are strongly encouraged to exercise their best judgment and recuse themselves from participating in or voting on matters where there is the *appearance* of a Conflict of Interest.

HARASSMENT POLICY

Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA) is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to volunteer and work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, MSGA expects that all relationships among volunteers and staff in and outside of the office will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice and harassment.

Equal Employment Opportunity

It is the policy of MSGA to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation and related medical conditions), marital status, physical or mental disability, veteran status, genetic information (including characteristics and testing), familial status, or sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law. . MSGA prohibits any such discrimination or harassment.

Retaliation Is Also Prohibited

MSGA requires the reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination or harassment. It is the policy of MSGA to investigate any such reports. MSGA prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or harassment or participates in an investigation of such reports.

Definitions of Harassment

- I. Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state and local laws. For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example: (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not so subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include, but are not limited to: unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendo; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature.



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II. Harassment on the basis of any other protected characteristic is also strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or that of his/her relatives, friends or associates, because of his/her race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation and related medical conditions), marital status, physical or mental disability, veteran status, genetic information (including characteristics and testing), familial status, or sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law and that: (i) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; (ii) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or (iii) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to: epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group and that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the employer's premises or circulated in the workplace.

Individuals and Conduct Covered

These policies apply to all volunteers, employees and applicants, whether related to conduct engaged in by fellow volunteers, employees or someone not directly connected to MSGA (e.g., an outside vendor, consultant or customer).

Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings and business-related social events.

Reporting an Incident of Harassment, Discrimination or Retaliation

MSGA requires the reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination, harassment or retaliation, regardless of the offender's identity or position. Individuals who believe that they have been the victim of such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, the MSGA President or the CEO of Ag Management Solutions, LLC. See the Complaint Procedure described below.

In addition, MSGA requires individuals who believe they are being subjected to such conduct to promptly advise the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcome and request that it be discontinued. Often this action alone will resolve the problem. MSGA recognizes, however, that an individual may prefer to pursue the matter through formal complaint procedures.

Complaint Procedure

Individuals who believe they have been the victims of conduct prohibited by this policy or believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with their immediate supervisor, the MSGA President or the CEO of Ag Management Solutions, LLC

MSGA requires the prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that constructive action can be taken before relationships become irreparably strained. Therefore, while no fixed reporting period has been established, early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment.



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Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated promptly. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent consistent with adequate investigation and appropriate corrective action.

Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately to the immediate supervisor, the MSGA President or the CEO of Ag Management Solutions, LLC and will be promptly investigated and addressed.

Misconduct constituting harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be dealt with appropriately. Responsive action may include, for example, training, referral to counseling and/or disciplinary action such as warning, reprimand, removal from the Board as defined in the bylaws

False and malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination or retaliation as opposed to complaints which, even if erroneous, are made in good faith, may be the subject of appropriate disciplinary action.

Conclusion

MSGA has developed this policy to ensure that all individuals are in an environment free from harassment, discrimination and retaliation. We will make every reasonable effort to ensure that all concerned are familiar with these policies and aware that any complaint in violation of such policies will be investigated and resolved appropriately. Anyone covered or affected by this policy who has any questions or concerns should talk with the MSGA President or the CEO of Ag Management Solutions, LLC.

DIRECTOR & TRAVEL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

- MSGA board meetings for Directors and County Chairs.
- Action Team meetings including Directors and non-director Action Team members.
- MSGA President's business expenses.
- Reimbursement of business expenses for Vice President, Secretary & Treasurer
- **Prior approval** is required from the MSGA President and Executive Director **before any expenses are to be incurred.**

GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMITTING CLAIMS

- Identify the purpose of the travel under the Explanation Section; also identify the most applicable Action Team.
- **Please attach an agenda of the meeting attended.**
- All claims shall be submitted within **60 days** of incurrence for reimbursement. A late fee of 1.5% per month will be assessed on late submissions. All expenses must be submitted prior to the end of the fiscal year (August 31).
- Expenses will not be reimbursed if also reimbursed by another entity. Duplicate reimbursement may result in the issuance of a 1099.
- **PER DIEM:** The current rate is **\$55.00** per day for MSR&PC action team members. • Per Diem is only applicable for MSR&PC appointed Action Team members when attending approved MSR&PC Action Team meeting, not individual project meetings.
 - Per diem is only paid on days included in the meeting agenda



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- Per diem is not applicable to Membership and Advocacy Action Team meetings.
- **MILEAGE:** Mileage will be reimbursed at the rate of **\$0.580 per mile**. • If an organization-sponsored bus is used, mileage will be paid to and from the bus.
 - Pooling rides should be done whenever possible, in which case mileage to and from the pool is reimbursed.
 - Mileage expense should reflect calculation from most direct route to meeting location within 10 (ten) miles.
- **MEALS:** The total costs of meals including tax and tip. **Maximum of \$50.00/per day**, per person (Alcoholic beverages are not allowable expenses). • Breakfast expense only if leaving before 7:30 AM.
 - Dinner expense only if returning after 7:00 PM.
- **LODGING:** The actual cost of lodging including tax.
 - **Night Prior:** A director has the option to be reimbursed for the standard hotel room when going to a meeting, event or flight the next morning, when the event begins and the director has to leave home before 6:30 AM. They may also be reimbursed for actual breakfast expenses not exceeding \$10.00 if leaving before 6:30 AM.
 - **Night Afterward:** A director has the option to be reimbursed for a standard hotel room when returning from a meeting, event or flight, if that function officially adjourned at a time where the director couldn't reasonably get home before 10:30 PM. Director may also be reimbursed for dinner expenses, not to exceed \$25.00-if there was not a meal provided with the event.
- Miscellaneous expenses should be itemized and explained.
- Maximum for total trip expenses will not exceed the equivalent of commercial airfare had the traveler made preparations to available himself/herself of the lowest available airfare.
- International Travel (only): Directors may be reimbursed up to \$200.00 per segment for upgrading to comfort or exit rows with prior approval from the MSR&PC Chair or Action Team Chair.
- **RECEIPTS:** Receipts are **required** for all expenses **over \$10.00**, except lodging, which requires receipts in all instances. Only \$10.00 per day will be reimbursed on any claims without a receipt. Documentation for **airfare reimbursement** should include the **invoice** for tickets as well as the plane **boarding pass**.
- Expenses for Spouses will not be reimbursed.
- Delegate reimbursement for the MSGA Annual Meeting will be the responsibility of the county organization.
- Internet: Internet charges incurred during approved hotel stays will be reimbursable.

PROVISION FOR POLICY AMENDMENTS

Policies may be amended by the MSGA Board of Directors.

MSGA POLICY VIOLATION

Any violations of the policies as stated in this manual may result in being removed from the Board of Directors or being asked to no longer represent MSGA in any program, activity or meeting.

MSGA POLICY MANUAL APPROVED:

The policies included in this document were reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors December 7, 2019.



Policy & Procedure Manual

I have read and agree to uphold and comply with the policies within this document. If my personal behavior or conduct should ever be determined to violate these policies, or be deemed inappropriate or unacceptable pursuant to: (a) these policies (b) the governing documents of MSGA, (c) any other policy or procedure of MSGA, or (d) as determined by a majority vote of MSGA Board of Directors (as applicable), I understand and agree that I shall be removed or asked to resign as an Office or Director effective immediately.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure:

To the best of my knowledge I ☐ **do** ☐ **do not** have any relationship with any Person or Entity that is transacting, has transacted or may transact business with the Board.

Please identify below the Person or Entity, the nature of the relationship and the nature of the transaction. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Please list all gifts valued at more than \$50 that you have received in the past year from Persons or Entities who have transacted, are transacting or may transact business with the Board. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Please identify all travel-related benefits that you have received in the past year from Persons or Entities who have transacted, are transacting, or may transact business with the Board. Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix 1.5




Minnesota Soybean Growers Association Board Meeting Agenda

Saturday, December 7, 2019
8:30 am
MN Soybean Office, Mankato

8:30 am	MSGA Board Meeting – Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance Approve Meeting Agenda Approve Meeting Minutes	Beyer
	Administrative Reports MSGA President MSR&PC Chairman Executive Director AMS Report	Beyer Trebesch Smentek Skaug/Freeman
9:45 am	Financial Reports	Brown
10:00 am	FY19 Auditors Report	Schlenner & Wenner
10:30 am	Legislative Updates - State	Cory Bennett
11:00 am	Legislative Updates – National	Ryan Findlay, Bev Paul
11:30 am	ASA Director Reports	Goblisch, Gordon, Hill, Kukowski, Schreurs
12:00 pm	Lunch	
1:00 pm	Learning Session	
3:00 pm	Action Team Reports Membership Advocacy Industry Relations Magazine Agencies & Rules Events	Worth Skaug Freeman Brekken Hovel Brown
4:00 pm	Adjourn	
5:00 pm	Gates Open	Mankato Civic Center
6:07 pm	MSU Maverick Hockey Game Food in Suite	

Appendix 1.6



Nearly 3,000 Minnesota soybean growers and agribusinesses have already invested in a sure thing. What's stopping you from joining?

Sign me up.

Name _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____

Farm/Business Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Email* _____ Phone #* _____ Cell # _____

*Required

Occupation: (Please check all that apply)

☐ Farmer ☐ Retired ☐ Agribusiness

☐ Finance ☐ Elevator

☐ Other _____

Do you currently grow soybeans? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you raise: ☐ Livestock ☐ Hogs

☐ Poultry ☐ Dairy

What priorities would you like to see MSGA work on?

☐ **3 Year Membership: \$250** (includes Minnesota Soybean long sleeve pullover)

Pullover size: (circle one) S M L XL XXL XXXL

☐ **1 Year Membership: \$120**

☐ **YES! I want to save \$20! 1 Year Membership: \$100** (with auto renew payment via credit card). By checking this option, I understand my annual membership to MSGA will renew automatically, charging the credit card on file at the time my membership expires.

☐ **Young Professional** (age 35 and under) **& Retired: \$70/year**

☐ **Student** (age 22 and under): **\$20/year**

☐ I'm a new member! ☐ Renewing Member ID#: _____

Recruiter Name & ID: _____

☐ Check Enclosed (Payable to: **MSGA**) ☐ CC: VISA / MASTER / DISC / AMEX

Card #: _____ Exp. (M/Y): ____/____

CVV _____ Name on Card: (Print) _____

Signature: _____

Online application available.
Join MSGA or renew your membership online at
mns soybean.org/msga/invest



Minnesota Soybean Growers Association

RECEIPT

This certifies that

is a member of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association.

\$ _____ for _____ year/s. Date _____

Dues to the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association are not deductible as a charitable contribution, but may double as an ordinary and necessary business expense. A portion of the dues, however, is not deductible as an ordinary and necessary business expense to the extent that the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association engages in lobbying. **The non-deductible portion of dues for fiscal year 2020 is 15.62% (deductible portion is 84.38%).** MSGA recommends visiting with your accountant when claiming this expense.

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Mankato, MN 56001
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www.mns soybean.org



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Representing
over 27,000
current and
future Minnesota
soybean growers.

Lend your voice today.

Every day, year after year, you work hard to make sure your operation is successful and around for years to come. For you. For your family. For the future. So does the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association.

Your membership in MSGA supports our legislative efforts in St. Paul and Washington, D.C.

Join MSGA, the organization for farmers, by farmers ... and for those farmers yet to come.

MSGA members receive the following benefits and discounts:

- National Biodiesel Board Vehicle Discount
- Cabela's discount (10%)
- 10% discount on any new DTN/The Progressive Farmer product or service agreement
- Commodity Classic Registration - \$100 Savings
- American Soybean Association (ASA) Membership
- \$5,000 College Scholarship Opportunity

Choose a membership option that's right for you.

3 Year: \$250

- Biodiesel coupon (Value: \$100)
- All 1-year benefits listed above
- Minnesota Soybean long sleeve pullover

1 Year: \$120/year

1 Year: \$100/year - **SAVE \$20 by choosing this option.**

Choose the 1-year membership option with auto-renew payment via credit card

Young Professional (age 35 and under) & Retired: \$70/year

Student (age 22 and under): \$20/year

Join today or renew your membership online at mnsoybean.org/msga/invest

Questions about your membership? Call us! 888-896-9678

MSGA: The leader for Minnesota soybean farmers



Now more than ever, Minnesota soybean farmers are being strapped with more regulations, skyrocketing healthcare premiums – with fewer options – and many more unfavorable policies. Most lawmakers get it; however, some do not. MSGA helps close that gap.

In 2019, MSGA dreamed big, and its efforts paid off following the legislature approving \$5 million in funding as part of the Soy Innovation Campus near the UMN Crookston campus.

MSGA, along with other agriculture and commodity groups, also found success when it came to the omnibus tax bill, which will gradually increase the school building bond ag credit from 40 to 70 percent, give clarification to the ag homestead tax credit and bring Minnesota's Section 179 tax policy into conformity.

MSGA was also a staunch advocate for raising awareness and funding for rural mental health. As a result, the legislature approved \$1.3 million for more assistance throughout greater Minnesota.

Dues to the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association are not deductible as a charitable contribution, but may double as an ordinary and necessary business expense. A portion of the dues, however, is not deductible as an ordinary and necessary business expense to the extent that the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association engages in lobbying. The non-deductible portion of dues for fiscal year 2020 is 15.62% (deductible portion is 84.38%).

WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK.

The Minnesota Soybean Growers Association pounds the pavement all year long in St. Paul and Washington, D.C., for our state's soybean farmers and their families.

From tax policy to regulatory issues – and all legislation in between – we've protected and uplifted generations of Minnesota farmers. Since our first board meeting in 1962, we've been guided by the principles of our farmer advocates.

But the heavy lifting promoting and defending farm-friendly policy can't be achieved alone. Fewer than 10% of Minnesota's nearly 28,000 farmers are active in MSGA. Membership is our lifeblood because checkoff dollars can't be used for legislative activities. There is safety in numbers. When you join MSGA, you'll know you're making a sound investment in your operation.

Together, with members and leaders like you, we can flourish for today's and tomorrow's farmers.

We are by your side. Won't you join us today?



"It gives me comfort knowing MSGA is looking out for not only my farming operation, but also my family's legacy. Even during the busiest times of the year, they are still fighting on my behalf."

-Darin Johnson, Wells, Minn.



"We're all busy people and can't be in St. Paul or Washington, D.C., as much as we'd like. We need MSGA advocating on our behalf to promote our industry. We can't go at this alone, so let's do it together."

-Chris Opdahl, Slayton, Minn.



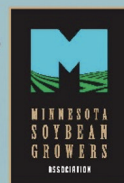
"As a next-generation farmer, MSGA is paving the way for me to be successful. They amplify my voice and ensure the next group of farmers and our priorities are heard through the Capitol halls."

-Kelsey Anderson, Gaylord, Minn.



Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
151 Saint Andrews Court Suite 710
Mankato, MN 56001
507-388-1635
info@mnsogrowers.org
http://mnsogrowers.org/msga

JOIN THE FIGHT.



Our MSGA members demand results at the Capitol. We deliver.

Since 1962, MSGA has cultivated a legacy of notching policy wins for Minnesota farmers. Talk is cheap, but for less than 25 cents a day, an MSGA membership pays big bucks, year-after-year, spanning generations of Minnesota farmers.

➤ We dream big. MSGA farmer directors, in coordination with our communications and lobbying team, successfully advocated for \$5 million in funding toward the Ag Innovation Campus. This one-of-a-kind crush facility is primed to transform Minnesota's agriculture economy.

➤ Our award-winning communications team takes an aggressive stance. We fought back against an Administrative Penalty Order that would've unjustly penalized farmers due to buffer noncompliance. The governor quickly issued an apology, reversing the policy. Simply put: MSGA's advocacy saved our members thousands of dollars in potential fines.

➤ Since the 1990s, MSGA has advocated for – and protected – higher volumes of biodiesel. But we don't rest on our laurels, not with an economic generator like biodiesel, which adds up to a dollar to every bushel of soybeans.

➤ Farmers carry a heavy tax burden. Our members have seen their property taxes eased with the gradual increase of the farm-to-school tax credit from 40% to 70%. For a 400-acre farm with an additional \$25 levy, we helped put nearly \$7,000 back into our members' pockets.

➤ Rural broadband access is essential to your operation. We lobbied for substantial infrastructure upgrades, and the Legislature took notice, approving \$40 million toward expanding Greater Minnesota's rural broadband access.



Our secret weapon

Every advocacy organization needs a strong lobbying team. We're fortunate to have the best of the lobbying best working for farmers in St. Paul.

When the rubber meets the road at the Capitol, we have an ace up of our sleeve. Two, in fact.

Cory Bennett and A.J. Duerr have a wealth of experience lobbying for farmers. Our dynamic duo cultivates relationships with legislators, elected officials and public agencies.

When you join MSGA, you'll know you have friends at the Capitol protecting your interests.

WE FIGHT TO PROTECT YOUR FARM, FAMILY & FUTURE.

Gordon family, Nobles County

HAVING ONLY 10 PERCENT OF SOYBEAN FARMERS AS MEMBERS IS LIKE FIGHTING WITH ONE ARM TIED BEHIND YOUR BACK.

Appendix 1.7

Fueling Agriculture. One soybean at a time.

Introducing the Soy Innovation Campus.

The Soy Innovation Campus, which will be located near the University of Minnesota - Crookston campus, would house a large scale 30-million gallon biodiesel and extraction facility, as well as a small, non-profit specialty soybean mechanical extraction plant and oil refining operation.

MN legislature approves \$5 million for specialty processing

During the 2019 legislative session, Gov. Tim Walz signed the omnibus agriculture finance bill, paving the way for \$5 million in funding for a non-profit specialty crush facility. This will be used for identity preserved soy and specialty grain processing, catering to those producers. The facility will also allow for a more cost-effective way to conduct specialty research projects in hopes to increase value-added agriculture production in the region.

The large crush facility at a glance.

- ✓ 21 million bushel crushing capacity
- ✓ Estimated to increase the market price of soybeans by up to 20 cents
- ✓ 330 new job placements
- ✓ \$324 million in long-term economic advancements
- ✓ Serves as an additional option to market soybeans in northwest Minnesota

Learn more at soyinnovationcampus.org



Bringing it back to the biodiesel basics.

Biodiesel is a clean-burning, locally grown fuel that is produced to reduce the use of petroleum diesel while finding a market for soybean oil, ultimately increasing the demand for Minnesota's soybeans.

- Because of biodiesel, farmers are able to sell their soybeans for an average of 63 cents more per bushel.
- The first and only advanced biofuel increases the demand for Minnesota's soybeans by nearly 13 percent.
- Biodiesel uses 300 percent more soybean oil than it did 10 years ago.
- Using a 20 percent biodiesel blend in the summer and a 5 percent blend in the winter equates to removing 230,000 vehicles from the road each year.



This message brought to you by the county soybean organizations of Becker/Mahnomen, Clay/Wilkin, Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington/Red Lake, Polk and Roseau/Lake of the Woods, with the help of their soybean checkoff dollars.

To learn more, visit mnsoybean.org/msrpc

Non-Profit Org.
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Permit No. 66

Appendix 1.8

MINNESOTA STATE CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Sponsored by the West Central Cattlemen's Assn.

2019 Summer Tour

MORRIS, MN
JULY 9TH

REGISTRATION STARTS AT 6:30 AM | TOURS START AT 7:00 AM

Tour Stops:

MOORE CALVES:
Riverview LLP's Stevens County calf depot. Beef Builder* (beef x dairy) starter farm.

TEGRITY FEEDLOT:
Beef Builder* cattle to finish weights (formerly Leonard Wulf & Sons location).

JMF HEREFORDS AND SIMANGUS:
Purebred operation hosting on farm bull sale each spring.

DENNIS FEUCHTENBERGER:
Monoslope slat barn.

BONANZA BEAN:
Edible bean processor. Cleaning, drying, packaging a variety of edible beans.

BLACKWELDER DAIRY:
Robotic milking units and feed pusher.

BRUCE SPERR:
Covered feedlot system.

WALLY KILL:
Antique oil memorabilia. Restored gasoline pumps, signage, and filling station collector's items.

Hotel Information:

Grandstay - Morris, MN - (320) 585-4000
Country Inn & Suites - Benson, MN - (320) 843-4395
Grandstay - Glenwood, MN - (320) 334-3700
Super 8 - Morris, MN - (320) 589-8888
Prairie Waters Inn - Appleton, MN - (320) 289-2500

Schedule of Events

MONDAY, JULY 8TH, 2019

10:00 - 2:30 PM - MSCA BOD Meeting (West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) - Morris, MN)

2nd Annual MSCA Cornhole Tournament and Supper (Buddies Bar and Grill, Hancock MN)

4:00 - 4:30 PM - Registration & Social Hour

4:30 - 6:30 PM - Cornhole Tournament Sponsored by Vita-Firm and ROTOMIX

6:30 - 8:00 PM - Awards and Supper

TUESDAY, JULY 9TH, 2019

Lee Community Center, Stevens Co. Fairgrounds

6:30 - 8:30 AM - Registration and breakfast

7:00 AM - First bus tour leaves
Buses depart every half hour after 7 AM

11:30 AM - First bus returns for lunch

1:00 PM - First afternoon bus departs
Buses depart every half hour after 1 PM

5:30 - 7:30 PM - Steak supper served as buses return

Tour Participant Registration:

Before June 15, 2019: \$25
After June 15, 2019: \$30
Student Price: \$20
Children Under 12: \$15
Additional Lunch Ticket: \$10
Additional Steak Supper Ticket: \$15
**Meal Tickets can be picked up at registration*

Sponsored by



West Central Cattlemen's Association

FOR QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES, CONTACT:
ERIC ZELTWANGER (320) 766-0066



MSGA CARNIVAL

Wednesday, January 22

7 P.M.

Loose Moose Saloon

Tickets \$25 (available at the door)

Carnival Games • Prizes

Silent Auction • Drinks

Appetizers • 500 Club

**All proceeds benefit the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association*