

NOFA/Mass Strategic Plan

2019 5 Year Plan



Overview

NOFA/Mass last conducted strategic planning in 2009-10, an effort that resulted in the creation of the Public Relations Coordinator position, entry into the social media world of Facebook and Twitter and greater attention to our Website content. In 2014 we launched another strategic planning process, first surveying our members about their interests and needs and ascertaining their thoughts about areas on which NOFA/Mass might direct greater focus. In addition to this external focus, NOFA/Mass Board and Staff looked critically at our organization and what it needs to succeed. We developed a good understanding of our capabilities and strengths and also identified areas for improvement. We believe that there is strong alignment between our organizational awareness and competencies and our members' expectations and needs – an alignment that will enable us to successfully develop and deliver programs and services and to accomplish our mission of educating and advocating for organic agriculture. In 2018 the board and staff convened to update the plan and make slight adjustments.

Organizational Priorities

- 1.) Continue to lead in education and advocacy for farming and land-care practices that build soil carbon. **(Carbon)**
- 2.) Strengthen connections with underserved populations to improve their access to organic farming resources and to deepen their representation on NOFA/Mass Staff and Board. **(Inclusion)**
- 3.) Improve compensation structure (pay and benefits) to better attract, motivate and retain staff. **(Organizational Strength)**
- 4.) Increase provision of one-on-one technical assistance to organic growers and strengthen delivery of education and support to beginning farmers. **(Education)**

Department Operational Objectives

Administration: Increase efficiency of internal management through the implementation of an organization-wide Association Management System.

Education: Promote regenerative organic agriculture, with particular attention to building soil carbon, through educational workshops, conferences, media, technical support and advocacy.

Development: Continue to expand development portfolio income by diversifying sources and tracking.

Communications: Enhance NOFA/Mass website and media tools in order to optimize outreach and brand.

Key Performance Metrics

Income (2018)	\$724,575.76
Membership (2018)	1,118
Program attendance (Winter & Summer conferences, Education events)	1,978
Website page views	268,989
Website Users	88,381

Competitive and Collaborative Analysis

NOFA/Mass is engaged in multiple areas of education and advocacy - territory where many other organizations also have roots and branches. As we seek to optimize where and how we provide value to current and prospective members, it is important that we understand the programs, products and services that other organizations offer. We call this a "competitive and collaborative" analysis because many of the organizations with whom we "compete" for customers (i.e. education event attendance) are also ones with whom we may collaborate in the pursuit of the common goal of advancing organic agriculture.

Summary of Conclusions: NOFA/Mass is a leader in the areas of soil health and carbon, advanced grower education, and organic farming policy, and it offers robust resources in community building (farmer to farmer and farmer to gardener/ consumer). Areas that offer opportunities for improvement include: food access/social justice, cross-sector agriculture integration (reaching out to conventional and IPM farmers) and youth/children in agriculture. Beginning Farmer education is one area where many organizations, both locally and nationally, are providing resources. Conversely, cross sector agriculture integration and farmer technical support are underserved areas of focus. Our priorities address some areas identified as being underserved or as opportunities for improvement.

Marketing and Customers

NOFA/Mass develops and delivers educational events (e.g., workshops and conferences), information products (e.g., organic food guide) and services (e.g., organic certification assistance) designed and targeted to meet the needs of its core customer segments (**Figure 1**) NOFA/Mass reaches those customers through its website, social media, email marketing, press placements, physical handouts, and in-person outreach. Additionally, NOFA/Mass markets its mission and vision to members, funders and supporters in order to raise money through an annual fund-raising campaign, grants, major donor contributions, and corporate sponsorships and advertising. While there is considerable overlap with the core audience segments for products and services, there are additional and particular segments that provide this financial support and for which specialized marketing efforts are required. To strengthen its market presence with all audiences, the Development Committee plans to focus on:

- Expanded and strategic major donor relationship building
- Increased family foundation outreach
- Collaborative grant writing
- Employer matching funds program and Marketing communication tools, such as development collaterals, Get Involved Page on our website

Figure 1: NOFA/Mass Customer Segments

- Beginning and Advanced Farmers
- Gardeners
- Landscapers
- Homesteaders
- Food Processors
- Consumers
- Homeowners

Financial Profile and Projections

NOFA/Mass is an efficient and financially lean organization that works within a break-even budget of approximately \$700 thousand, funded through five sources (**Figure 2**). Non fee-based income is essential to maintaining a strong financial foundation that allows for consistency in programming, stability for employees and overall growth.

NOFA/Mass maintains a reserve account which we will be growing over each coming year to cover expenses and allow for operational flexibility should the economy or unforeseen disruptions cause a shortfall in revenue. Looking forward, NOFA/Mass will continue to explore opportunities to build additional reserves to ensure the long-term health of the organization, and it will work to create financial flexibility in recognition of the potential cost impacts of eventual senior leadership transition.

Figure 2: Funding Sources

- Membership Dues
- Program Fees
- Gifts
- Grants
- Sponsorships