

THE PORT TOWNSEND FOOD CO-OP

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2013-2017

INTRODUCTION

The Port Townsend Food Co-op is a natural foods consumer cooperative formed in 1972. We now serve over 6500 members with gross annual sales of close to \$12 million. A democratically elected board of directors holds responsibility for ensuring the cooperative meets the needs of the members and that resources are used wisely.

In 2012, the board and management of The Port Townsend Food Co-op (the Co-op) developed a strategic plan to guide our business efforts in the coming five years. The planning process steps included identification of strategic alternatives and six months of research, including key informant interviews, focus groups, a member forum, and a member survey. The board and management used this information to identify goals and strategies to guide the Co-op successfully into the future.

The strategic plan outlines five long-range goals that provide broad direction for management, while enabling flexibility and creativity in implementation. Corresponding to the priorities articulated in the Five Year Strategic Plan, the management of the Co-op is responsible for developing an Annual Business Plan with specific objectives, activities, and budget. The board of directors is responsible for monitoring progress, and annually reviewing and updating the five-year strategies as needed.

OUR MISSION

Seeking to uphold the health of our community and world, the Port Townsend Food Co-op, a consumer co-operative, serves our membership by making available reasonably priced whole foods and other basic goods and resources by means of our life-affirming democratic organization.

OUR PRINCIPLES

The Port Townsend Food Co-op, whose owners voluntarily and consciously co-operate for the common good, acts to create social and economic change and improvement within the larger community.

In the spirit of this cooperative endeavor, we affirm and promote our mission by:

1. Providing healthful, environmentally responsible and socially accountable food, products, packaging, nutritional information, and education.
2. Functioning as a member-owned cooperative, using a broad-range of opportunities for member volunteerism, participation, and involvement.
3. Creating a model for economic, social, and environmental justice, sustainability, democracy, and integrity.
4. Generating an engaging workplace through the cultivation of the principles of trust, fairness, transparency, democracy and cooperation.
5. Supporting local farmers and the development of regional food production systems and emphasizing seasonal availability of local and regional products.
6. Operating in a transparent fashion to engender trust in all aspects of cooperative governance and operations so that member votes, opinions, and concerns are heard and weighted fully.

SUMMARY OF LONG RANGE GOALS

1. **Market Position**

Strengthen our position as the community's leading source for organic, non-GMO, local, and regional products and make our cooperative even more welcoming, accessible, and affordable.

2. **Food System Development**

Actively collaborate in local and regional food system development.

3. **Internal Capacity Building**

Inspire and develop leadership, commitment, and passion within the organization.

4. **Environmental Sustainability**

Continue to improve the environmental sustainability of operations.

5. **Education, Outreach, Advocacy**

Target our education, outreach, and advocacy efforts to advance our mission and principles.

1. MARKET POSITION

LONG RANGE GOAL

Strengthen our position as the community's leading source for organic, non-GMO, local, and regional products and make our cooperative even more welcoming, accessible, and affordable.

OVERVIEW

When considering a strategic direction for the future, the board evaluated several different alternatives. Based on feedback from the membership, we determined that the Co-op should not make major changes to the style of the store or our product selection. However, our facility is currently not adequate to meet our needs, and it is time to figure out how we will accommodate future growth. Our research revealed that to better serve our members, we want to make our store more accessible. This means both improving our store and improving our systems for helping people access healthy food on a budget. Since we are a cooperative, we want to enhance the value of membership, which is an important part of what makes us unique as a business. Ultimately, as we strengthen our operations, attract more members, and increase sales, we will be better able to invest in our local food system and contribute to the health of our community.

MEASURES

- ⇒ Sales growth
- ⇒ Growth in number of members
- ⇒ Customer satisfaction with service and store
- ⇒ Customer use and awareness of programs and systems that help members buy affordable quality food

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIES

- Distinguish our Co-op as the best place to buy healthy food in our community, with exceptional customer service and a welcoming, vibrant, fun atmosphere.
- Improve and promote programs and systems that help Co-op members access reasonably priced whole foods and other basic goods.
- Cultivate and promote member benefits to create greater value for our members and foster loyalty.
- Develop and implement our long term facilities plan.

BENCHMARKS

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| 2013 | ◆Member benefits evaluated
◆Market study conducted
◆Facilities upgraded to meet short-term needs |
| 2014 | ◆Feasibility study conducted and long-term facilities plan developed
◆Improved member benefits implemented
◆Marketing plan developed
◆Patronage refund system evaluated |
| 2015 | ◆Facilities plan implementation underway |

RESULT: We will be the market of choice for our community to access local, organic, and non-GMO products.

2. FOOD SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

LONG RANGE GOAL

Actively collaborate in local and regional food system development.

OVERVIEW

A key strategic question the board considered was how deeply to invest in food system development and what our role should be. Feedback from key informants, focus groups, and member surveys indicated the Co-op already plays a valuable role and should continue to build upon its core competency: to grow the market for sustainably produced foods. This means strengthening our own capacity as a buyer and seller of regional products and working more closely with other businesses and non-profits to address the gaps in local/regional food production, storage and distribution. Ultimately, these efforts will result in building community food security and ensuring that our members are able to access healthy, local and regional foods, both now and in the future.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIES

- Increase diversity and quantity of local and regionally produced food available through the Co-op.
- Support local farmers and producers with information and assistance to meet the growing demand for local products.
- Collaborate with local partners to:
 - Strategically address gaps in food production, storage, and distribution.
 - Contribute to the development of local and regional food security plans.
 - Raise community awareness and support for local food production.
 - Explore ways to support local wholesale buyers to more easily purchase regional and local products.
- Expand and strengthen relationships with independent and/or cooperatively owned producers and distributors.

MEASURES

- ⇒ Volume and variety of local products sold
- ⇒ Number of local/regional vendors selling to the Co-op
- ⇒ Information and assistance provided to farmers/producers
- ⇒ Number of active partnerships and collaborative development projects
- ⇒ Number of local wholesale buyers purchasing regional and local products with co-op assistance.

BENCHMARKS

- 2014 Assessment completed for how the Co-op can best support local wholesale buyers, and feasible activities initiated.
- 2015 Coordination established with regional food cooperatives.
- 2017 Community food security plan developed with partners

RESULT: A vibrant local and regional food system will provide our community with a year-round supply of food sold at prices that are fair to both consumers and producers.

3. INTERNAL CAPACITY BUILDING

LONG RANGE GOAL

Inspire and develop leadership, commitment, and passion within the organization.

OVERVIEW

In order to be sustainable as an organization and implement our five-year strategies, it is essential that we build our internal capacity. Planning is useless without ensuring that the people who will be implementing the plan are able and motivated to carry out the work. In assessing our strengths and weaknesses, we already know that our staff have different reasons for working at the Co-op. We need to be the kind of employer that honors this diversity and encourages the best from everyone. Fair wages and benefits, solid training programs, and professional development opportunities are critical to making our Co-op a place where people feel proud to work. While this is certainly true of any healthy organization, as a cooperative, we especially need to focus on developing leadership skills at all levels of the organization – staff, management, and board. Our success depends on everyone’s ability to navigate change and encourage each other’s positive and respectful engagement.

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIES

- Cultivate best practices as an employer, including fair wages and benefits and opportunities for professional development.
- Strengthen internal systems that inspire all staff members to achieve goals and be rewarded for their efforts.
- Encourage a healthy workplace culture that engenders fun, learning, safety, effective communication, and kindness towards others.
- Grow skills and ability of the Management team and Board to:
 - Govern effectively
 - Address strategic issues
 - Lead organizational change
- Continue to improve the functional efficiency of our workplace.

MEASURES

- ⇒ Bi-annual study of competitive wages/benefits
- ⇒ Bi-annual employee opinion survey of staff satisfaction, communications, and leadership
- ⇒ Board effectiveness evaluation

BENCHMARKS

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| 2013 | Leadership Development Plans established for staff, management, and board. |
| 2014 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Employee benefits programs evaluated and implemented◆ Comprehensive staff training system established |

RESULT: We will have an engaged staff and board that use their expanding knowledge and skills to create a thriving workplace.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

LONG RANGE GOAL

Continue to improve the environmental sustainability of our operations.

OVERVIEW

The Co-op already has a strong track record in making environmentally friendly choices in how we conduct our operations. Our survey confirmed that this is important to our members but not at a higher level of priority than other values they associate with the Co-op. Therefore, in terms of time and resources, the board determined that we would continue on course with steady improvement in this area. To help us prioritize and communicate our efforts, we will establish a clear vision and using measurement tools such as the Sustainable Food Trade Association [SFTA] as a guide. By demonstrating and communicating our results, our members will know they are investing in a store that is actively improving its environmental practices (such as reducing waste and conserving energy) and helping shoppers who wish to do so as well.

MEASURES

- ⇒ Energy measures such as propane and electrical usage
- ⇒ Waste measures such as cubic yards being sent to the landfill
- ⇒ Application of SFTA metrics in operations and capital improvements

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIES

- Continue to improve our energy efficiency and reduce our waste.
- Measure and report on our progress towards environmental sustainability.
- Include relevant environmental sustainability metrics when considering capital improvements.
- Include in our focus on environmental sustainability the products we choose to carry.

BENCHMARKS

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| 2013 | ♦ Part-time staff position established to support sustainability effort
♦ First Annual Report submitted to SFTA |
| 2014 | 20-year Vision of Sustainability developed |
| 2015 | Metrics refined to align with 20-Year Vision |

RESULT: Our operations will be environmentally sustainable for the benefit of our members, community, and the planet

5. EDUCATION, OUTREACH, ADVOCACY

LONG RANGE GOAL

Target our education, outreach, and advocacy efforts to advance our mission and principles.

OVERVIEW

An engaged and educated membership is essential to the success of a cooperative. The question facing us today is how to focus our education, outreach, and advocacy efforts effectively. Input from key informants suggested that the Co-op could make a big impact by providing education and advocacy on topics such as reducing carbon footprint, understanding the cooperative model, and helping low-income people and youth learn how to access and cook healthy, local food. Informants also recommended that the Co-op should join forces with other organizations to access target audiences, especially in advocacy efforts. Given the breadth of opportunities, the Co-op will proceed with developing a plan with clear outcomes, to leverage our impact and reinforce our strategic direction. One of these directions is to ensure that youth and young adults are engaged in the conversation as the next generation of leaders.

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIES

- Focus our education, outreach, and advocacy efforts strategically
- Engage our member-owners in:
 - Ongoing dialog about strategic directions.
 - Advocacy opportunities that advance our mission and principles.
 - Understanding & promoting the cooperative model.
- Expand programs to educate people of all ages and all walks of life about the benefits of healthy food choices.
- Collaborate with other organizations to leverage our education, outreach and advocacy efforts.

MEASURES

- ⇒ Participation in educational programs
- ⇒ Frequency of articles in our newsletter and/or local press about programs, policies, or initiatives that we are co-promoting with local and national partners.
- ⇒ Number of youth and young adults participating in programs and co-op activities.

BENCHMARKS

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| 2013 | Goals and resources for education, outreach, and advocacy identified |
| 2015 | Education, Outreach, Advocacy Plan(s) established, with specific targets for change. |

RESULT: Our members will be knowledgeable about the products they consume, the connection between food choices and personal health, and environmentally sustainable practices.