

WFAN Strategic Plan

2016 - 2021

Introduction

The Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN) originated in 1994, when lowan organic farmer Denise O'Brien and New York-based food activist Kathy Lawrence formed a working group in preparation for the United Nation's 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing. Following these efforts, O'Brien continued to represent agricultural women at national and international events. In 1997, O'Brien and a group of women in central Iowa resolved to take action to address systemic rural and agricultural concerns. Working together as WFAN, these women shared a feminist, activist, and progressive agenda. WFAN was established as an independent nonprofit in 2011 after having spent a decade as a non-profit within the Tides Foundation.

Today WFAN's network consists of approximately 5,000 farmers, advocates, workers, activists, students, researchers, and educators and has national and international reach. Our work continues to be based in a holistic view of agriculture and driven by social and ecological justice for current and future human and non-human communities.

The WFAN board created this strategic plan to define priorities for 2016-2021. This strategic plan provides guideposts to growth for us as an organization, and it offers a framework we can use to continually improve how we are meeting our mission.



Mission and Vision

WFAN's mission is to: engage women in building an ecological and just food and agricultural system through individual and community power.

WFAN's vision is: a vibrant, community-centered food and agricultural system in which women are strong leaders.

Strategic Issues

1.) Development

Current situation: The majority of WFAN support comes from federal funding sources, with private funders and individual donors also supporting our work. WFAN has built great collaborations with United States Department of Agriculture agencies to increase outreach to women in food and agriculture, yet we are hearing programming needs and desires from women in agriculture that require an increase and diversification of partnerships and funding sources.

Goal: Increase and diversify funding streams in order to establish a sustainable financial basis for WFAN, so we can meet the varying needs of women in agriculture.

Objective: Create a multi-year development plan that will include a variety of strategies such as annual appeals, fundraising events, large donor development, board development, and board member training.

Objective: Evaluate the cost and benefits of hiring a development staff person, and identify the functional overlaps between development, advocacy, and program work.

2.) Engaged Membership

Current situation: While WFAN is not currently legally organized as a membership organization, we have built a network that enables women in food and agriculture to connect with members of their larger community.



Goal: The members of our community identify as WFAN members and understand clearly what membership means.

Objective: Investigate membership structures and determine the best option for WFAN.

Objective: Communicate with members about the benefits of WFAN membership and how their membership supports WFAN.

Objective: Increase the number of people who identify as members and increase the involvement of existing members.

Objective: Investigate ways to increase our team's capacity to communicate with members, including whether to hire staff to coordinate membership.



3.) Communications and Outreach

Current situation: WFAN provides needed outreach to women, and we have a unique perspective on food and agriculture. While there is competition to be the woman's voice in agriculture, the values of our members are not properly represented.

Goal: We are the voice of our members, and we bring unique stories and perspectives to a variety of media outlets. We are a reliable, respected, and well-known voice for food and agriculture issues. We change the dominant narrative on food and agriculture by getting our members' stories and perspectives into the mainstream.

Objective: Create a communications plan that includes collecting stories from members, creating communications toolkits, and building better relationships with media outlets.

Objective: Build our narrative and ensure that we use progressive and thoughtful language in reflecting our members' values.

4.) Our Work

Current situation: We are proud of our programming that actively works to decrease sexism, racism, and patriarchy within agriculture, and recognize that there is more we could do to meet our members' needs.



Goal: WFAN programming continues to meet the evolving needs of our members, sustain current members and attract new members, and effectively evaluate and communicate about our successes.

Objective: Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of each existing program, and look for opportunities to expand, modify, or augment these programs.

Objective: Continue to learn from our

members about the barriers they face, and investigate opportunities for new programming that addresses those barriers.

Objective: Investigate new modes of engaging our membership, including offerings accessible to a wider audience beyond our current programs.

5.) Our Staff

Current situation: We have an incredibly skilled and dedicated staff that accomplishes an amazing quality and quantity of work. To expand our work and our reach, we need to increase staff capacity.

Goal: WFAN grows its staffing to meet the goals laid out in this strategic plan. Our staff feels highly supported and sees WFAN as a place where they want to have their careers.

Objective: Retain staff by ensuring that our staffing policies reflect our values, including providing livable wages and benefits, a sustainable work/life balance, professional development, and a respectful organizational culture.

Objective: To guide growth in the number of staff, create a skills inventory of existing staff that allows us to identify needed skills in future staff positions, and to prioritize staffing needs.

Objective: Prioritize the need for increased staffing within our development work and to plan for sustainable growth.