

South Whidbey Tilth Survey

Mission Statement

South Whidbey Tilth Association is an educational association, the purpose of which is to support and promote biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture. Our commitment is to advocate, study and teach agricultural practices consistent with stewardship of the natural world. We promote and demonstrate principles and practices of sustainable agriculture, as well as cultivate a variety of opportunities for local market gardeners and farmers.

1. What aspects of South Whidbey Tilth's mission are most relevant today?
2. What are the strengths of South Whidbey Tilth as an organization (i.e, council, committees, members and partners)?
3. What are its weaknesses?
4. What should the South Whidbey Tilth 11+ acre campus express? It's uses?
5. How could we best share the accumulated knowledge of our members?
6. Why did you become a member of South Whidbey Tilth?
7. What would you like to see more of from South Whidbey Tilth?
8. How do you get current information on organic food access and food growing?
9. In our community, what gaps in the local organic/sustainable farming could South Whidbey Tilth fulfill?
10. How do you prefer to get "how-to" information about organic food and growing methods? (i.e. classes, online, newsletter, books, etc.)

See workshop agenda on the other side

Strategic Planning Workshop Agenda

December 8, 2018 at Whidbey Akhaldans

Objectives

Strengthen sense of common purpose

Deepen connection between participants

Gain Momentum with concrete next steps

Outcomes

Strategies to increase impact: with details of who/how much (measurement) and how (activity)

- Reaching more people who will benefit
 - From Tilth programs
 - From being part of Tilth community/membership/partnerships
- Improving/increasing program offerings for advocacy, study and teaching
 - Classes
 - Demonstrations of principles and practices
 - Opportunities for gardeners and farmers
- Strengthening organizational capacity
 - Increased numbers involved in leadership
 - Increased number of active volunteers
 - Strategic and annual plans
- Increasing revenue
 - From Farmers' Market
 - From donations
 - From grants
 - From programs
 - Other??

Workshop actions

1. Participants reviewed summary of results and were asked:
 - a. What surprises or provides fresh ideas for you?
 - b. What discourages you?
2. Compare notes with a partner
 - a. What are the 2 or 3 best ideas?
 - b. What are the biggest challenges for Tilth?
3. In a group, rank the following in order of importance and then in order of difficulty
 - Increasing revenue
 - Increasing Organizational Capacity
 - Increasing Reach
 - Increasing/improving program offerings

BREAK

Choice of strategic groups and explanation of task

1. Set measurable objectives (SMART)
2. Describe how you plan to achieve the objectives
3. Who will be responsible for each step?
4. How much will this cost?

Broke out into small groups for about half an hour, then we shared all together. The time was very intense for a four hour workshop and more time would have been useful.

Notes from South Whidbey Tilth Retreat

Dec. 8, 2018

SURVEY RESULTS

Mission

South Whidbey Tilth Association is an educational association, the purpose of which is to support and promote biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture. Our commitment is to advocate, study and teach agricultural practices consistent with stewardship of the natural world. We promote and demonstrate principles and practices of sustainable agriculture, as well as cultivate a variety of opportunities for local market gardeners and farmers.

The Mission is More Relevant Than Ever

- Stewardship for the natural world
- Healthy land
- Sustainable agriculture
- Local farmers and gardeners
- Education, support, demonstration,
- Promotion, advocacy, raising awareness
- All. A very good mission statement. No changes needed.

Strengths and Assets

Place

- 11 acres
- Sunday Market
- Community Garden plots
- Natural World

Community

- Everyone is friendly
- Connection and Partnership
- Like-minded people

Commitment

- By leadership
- Volunteer efforts

Knowledge

- Large fund of knowledge base
- Classes
- Support and information for all organic farmers

Weaknesses and Threats

- Aging members, volunteers and leadership
- Low level of attendance – market and classes
- Low visibility and awareness – of market, of other program offerings (or farmers and for wider community) of Tilth and its mission.
- Same small group of volunteers
- Burn out of those doing the work
- Uneven distribution of work between council and committee members
- Workshops held on precious summer weekend days
- Last minute decisions and actions
- Need new, younger members, fresh ideas, energy
- Amateurish singers

Widening the Focus

- From food to our relationship to the land in general
- Listen the land to hear what it is saying (coordinate with homeless shelters for food donation)
- From food to health and wellness (partner with health community)
- Restoration of natural habitat
- Sustainable landscaping
- Community projects
- Permaculture and food forests
- Re-skilling [of what?]
- Alternative energies – wind and solar

Building Community

- Partnerships with Washington State University and South Whidbey School [“O”?] Agriculture Program and other local organizations, Slow Food, ...
- Community worked educational gardens
- Community orchard
- Festivals, events and celebrations all Earth Based
- Hosting conversations during winter months to share knowledge
- Panel discussions
- Back to monthly gardening group
- ‘Growers’ support group
- Town hall meetings at the Grange and Bayview Hall

Resource ‘Center’

- Sustainable resource center
- Resource list of individuals willing to answer questions, mentor, etc.
- Island guide to finding, using and benefitting from soil amendments and weed suppression techniques
- Local ‘wiki’ for sharing and safe storage of vast expertise, knowledge and resources – local and worldwide
- Index of healthy sustainable resources
- Pledges from resource collectors to pass on to growers and local gardeners
- Be a hub/platform/meeting place for people and organizations involved in sustainable living and farming

Where is the Information?

- On-line
- Newsletters – Organic Farm School and South Whidbey Tilt
- Facebook
- Chris Williams’ “Free Range News” email newsletter
- Work of mouth and walk around, ear to the ground
- Books, Magazines
- Seed House and catalogues
- “Internet and old books” *[why is this in quotes]*

Vision

- A wild and working place for community to gather and learn
- Involve people in the discovery of Nature in a living mythology in the contemporary world.
- Provide classes in natural growing and also in reskilling in native plant and landscape restoration, and in old skills like the making of value-added products from our produce
- Find a way to hold events and classes for people too busy to attend

This, rather than that

- Focus on home gardeners and beginning farmers rather than professional farmers
- Keep land for gardens and wild rather than for housing

Exercise: Group Task Prioritizing and Difficulty of Implementation Ranking

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Priority from 1st to 4th	Organizational. Capacity Revenue Programming Reach	Reach and Programming Revenue & Organizational. Capacity	Reach Organizational Capacity Revenue Programming	Programming Reach Organizational Capacity Revenue
Difficulty of Implementation From most to least	Organizational Capacity	Reach and Programming		Revenue
	Revenue			Reach
	Reach	Revenue and Organizational Capacity		Organizational Capacity
	Programming			Programming

Group Brainstorming

Revenue

- Capital Campaign
 - Regional and local corporate donors
 - Grants and appeals
 - Endowments and matching funds
- Fundraising Committee
 - Letters and targets
 - Launching campaign May 2019
 - Cost \$500 for mailing/printing
 - Marshaling resources **[what does this mean]**
- Brochure
 - Tailored for donors
- Farm stand and Entrance
 - New entry, invites people to enter and visit farm stand and projects

Organizational Capacity

- Funnel – pipeline of people involved in South Whidbey Tilth
- Types of Volunteers
 - Project leader
 - Committees
 - Work parties
- Future goal of paid staff person
- Recruiting at events

- Ongoing events to hook people
- Organize committees conducive to member involvement and focus on priorities
 - Finance
 - Membership
 - add Fundraising
 - Market
 - Education
 - Land Stewardship
 - add Community Garden committee
 - add Communications committee

Programs

Measurable Objectives for:

- Website update – meetings and implement in March
- Calendar Planning Meeting – early January
 - Education and Membership activities
 - Sustainability Potluck
- Identify Collaborators
- Join Regional Networks
- Classes – Cooking
- Market – taste of week, apple cider pressing, nettle festival
- Sustainability Potluck
- Annual meeting
- Maintenance activities
- Hands-On workshops
- Field Trips
- Educational Displays
- Soil building
- Monthly Garden Discussion Group
- Native Plants
- Sustainability series – collaborations with other organizations/individuals with skills and knowledge to share
 - Cooking
 - Natural building (cobb)
 - Tool use and maintenance and repair
 - Soil
 - Mulching
 - Cover Cropping
 - Compost
 - Seeds and plant starting
 - Choosing plants
- Food access – donations and partnering (e.g. Whidbey Island Nourishes)
- Community Garden
- Film night

Reach – to our communities for partnerships and to our members and the public for involvement and awareness of us and our mission

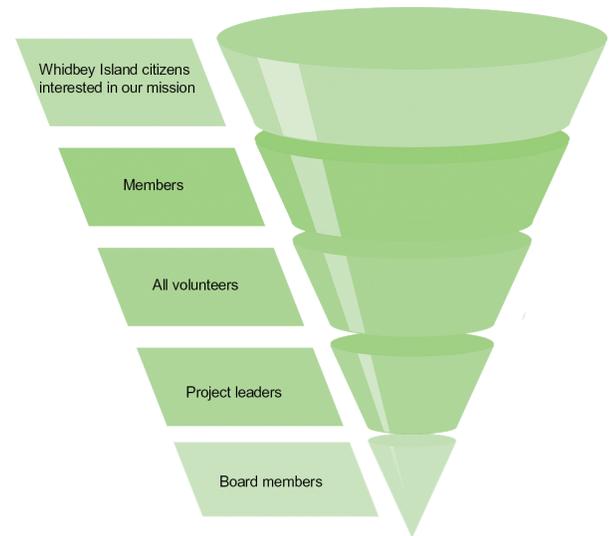
- Reach out to youth organizations to develop ideas for appropriate programs 2019

- Develop statements that engage people, e.g. “elevator talk (condensed) on mission” – “bait”, refine statements for different audiences
- Summer camp for youth, plus seasonal weekend series throughout seasons – include myth, storytelling
- Engage with visitors at South Whidbey Tilth market and events
- Educational events more often
- Build energy with people we interact with through compelling easy to understand messaging and story telling
- Ongoing refinement of outreach programming
- Legacy passing [**what is this**]

The pipeline concept—To keep a volunteer organization vital and growing, we recognize that a new person won't be ready to be on the board. Future leaders start as new members and volunteers. So the more we can build the member and volunteer base, we will be in a better position to build strong future leadership.

The funnel visual—We can think of the organization's volunteer pathway as a sort of funnel.

In a group the size of Tilth presently, visualize a group of 100 to 200 active volunteers.



Types of Volunteers

- Project leader
- Project participant
- Part of a committee
- Work parties
- Event volunteers

How to we find more volunteers?

- Relationship recruiting – a fancy way of saying a current involved member is probably the best person to pull in new volunteers
- Recruiting at events and at the market—make this an expected practice. Current involved members actively speaking about Tilth. Note: increasing event attendance will likely increase the number of members and volunteers as well
- Multi-class educational programs would be a great way to show people who we are, and convince them to volunteer
- Social media, email and other outreach with specific tasks
- Eventually have the assistance of a paid staff person.

Committees—Organize committees conducive to member involvement and focus on priorities:

- Finance
- Membership
- Market
- Education
- Land Stewardship
- add Fundraising
- add Community Garden committee
- add Communications committee

Board—Our board is a “working board” where each person is a committee chair or officer

Paid staff person

As we grow, let's try to get a half-time staff that can: Help Committee chairs recruit volunteers — via a toolbox of ideas and actions, or actually do the search and relationship building

Help keep track of projects, their progress, budgets, etc. Will help keep us focused.

Cost per year: \$20,000 to \$30,000 for a half time position

Other thoughts

Strategic long-term plans and good follow-through and remaining very focused will help us draw more interest and commitment from volunteers (also helps with fundraising).

Don't try to do it all at once—set priorities. As we grow we can do more at once, but we should scale our aspirations to what we can get done with good energy.

Find out what the broader community is interested in, by doing what they want, we are more likely to get their participation at all levels.