

RED WIGGLER COMMUNITY FARM

Strategic Plan

February 2015 – February 2018

Last Updated: March 20, 2015

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Our Intention

Red Wiggler Community Farm (RWCF) was founded in 1996, in response to the need for healthy food and meaningful employment for adults with developmental disabilities. Now entering our 20th year, Red Wiggler has grown to support cross-functional programming that employs, educates and feeds youth and adults with and without disabilities throughout the greater Montgomery County, Maryland area. To this end, our Board of Directors recognizes the value in and the responsibility for creating a meaningful strategic plan that guides our work as we fulfill our mission. This strategic plan, building on prior work plans, was created with the integration of Board and staff which has helped create a shared vision for our future and the future of the farm. Moreover, it builds on our vision, mission and values by outlining clear priorities and identifying bold steps/strategies that will support our organization for years to come.

This three-year strategic plan lays the foundation for RWCF to continue to dedicate and prioritize resources towards creating fertile ground to nourish a healthy and inclusive community in support of both our organization as well as our mission.

Our Vision

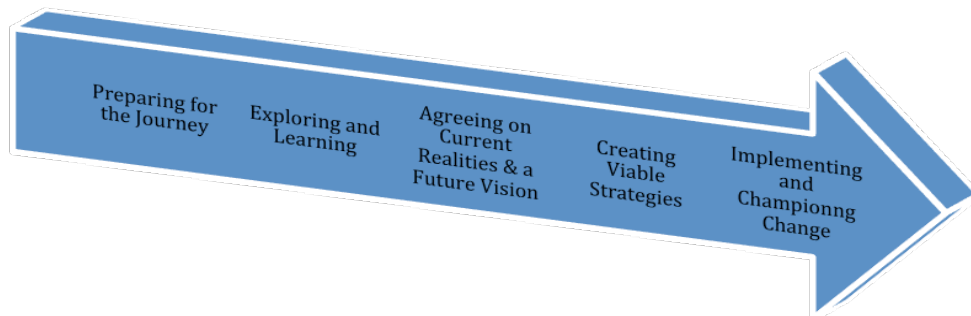
To create fertile ground to nourish a healthy and inclusive community.

Our Mission

Red Wiggler is a sustainable farm where people with and without developmental disabilities come together to work, learn, and grow healthy food.

Our Process

We engaged Brighter Strategies, a firm that provides strategic planning, process improvement and leadership development consulting, to facilitate a strategic visioning and organizational assessment process, which walked our Board of Directors and staff through the stages of the strategy planning process.



These stages include:

1. **Preparing for the Journey:** Before our Strategic Planning workshops, RWCF's leadership worked with Brighter Strategies to ensure that all elements of the organization would be explored and engaged during this important journey. Brighter Strategies conducted interviews with RWCF's leadership team, as well as focus groups with the staff and the Board of Directors. Brighter Strategies also conducted a document analysis of current plans, relevant materials, and other products/deliverables that would provide insights into our work and current operations.
2. **Exploring and Learning:** Building on the information gathered in stage 1, we engaged in a strategic conversation with our Board and staff to explore the history of our program and explore the context within which we currently operate. Through our discussions we identified discussion points, trends and practices that best highlighted where we are now and the type of organization we aspire to be.
3. **Agreeing on Current Realities & a Future Vision:** During the discussion we created a solid platform of information and agreements that served as a springboard for the strategy development stage. At this meeting we identified RWCF's strengths and challenges and refined the mission statement to better reflect our current work.
4. **Creating Viable Strategies:** From our analysis and our self-reflection, we then identified five overarching priorities or strategies that leveraged our internal strengths, addressed potential threats and associated organizational problems, and created strategic opportunities that will guide us toward success.
5. **Implementing and Championing Change:** As we know, the ultimate success of any strategic visioning process is the extent to which leadership and key stakeholders share ownership. During this stage, we established a year-one implementation plan, which include milestones and targets to be communicated with our staff, Board, and our valued stakeholders. It is through this stage of ongoing implementation and evaluation that we will successfully champion change.

Our Drivers

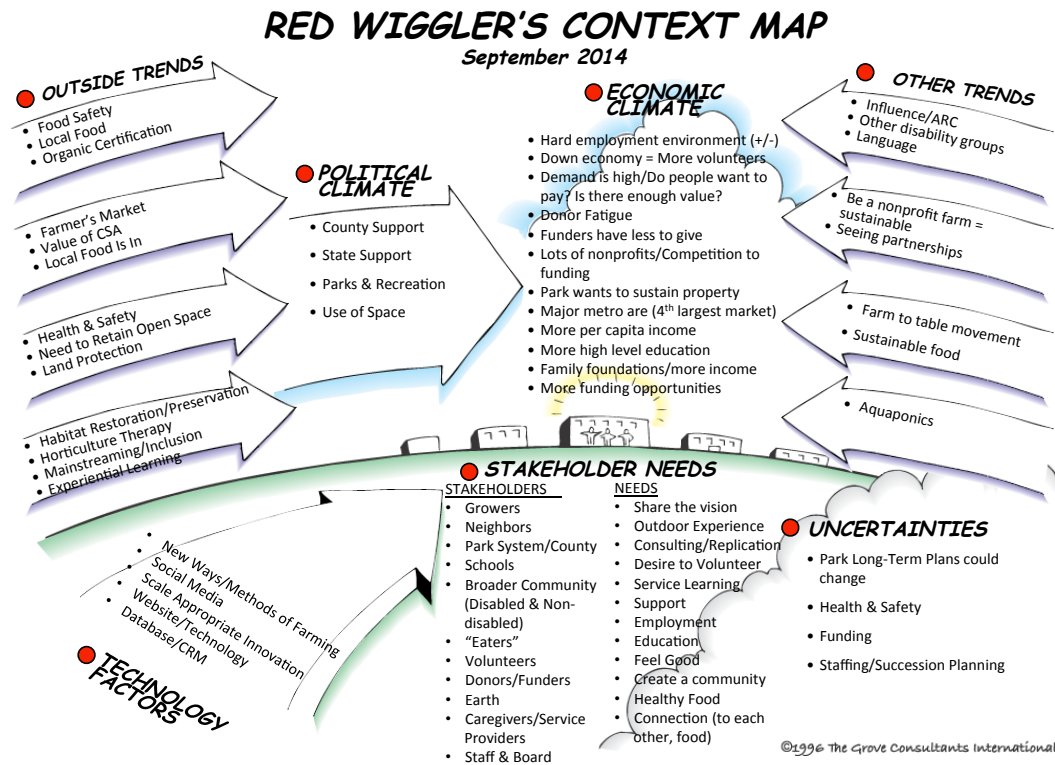
While our mission is the foundation to our strategic plan, our vision serves as a key driver in producing our strategic priorities, which will help us achieve our shared goals. Some of the key elements of our shared vision include:

- Ensuring every person has an opportunity to learn and grow

- Offering an inclusive, supportive environment where many parts work together to make a whole
- Challenging ourselves to embrace new skills, ideas, and opportunities (creating a culture of inquiry and exploration)
- Build on our strengths (enhancing the strong foundation we've already created)
- Creating a therapeutic nurturing environment, an oasis for our staff and the community
- Becoming a truly sustainable system (financially, environmentally, etc.)
- Replicating elsewhere, but maintaining what we have here (being a lighthouse, leading the way for other farms)

Context Map

The Context Map (or environmental scan) was also an important driver as it helped define the environment within which RWCF works, as well as identify enabling as well as inhibiting trends that might impact us in the future as we embark on our mission work.



Strengths and Problems Analysis

Finally, strengths & problems analysis served as a significant driver in our strategy-making process. By exploring our organization-wide strengths, internal problems, and potential strategic opportunities, we defined our next steps and began to identify ways to address our problems. We summarized the following core strengths that Red Wiggler can lean on to move towards the vision:

- Dedicated & committed staff and Board
- Strong committed leadership
- Strong technical expertise on staff (farming)
- As the longest running CSA in the county, Red Wiggler shares a compelling story – programs appeal to a broad base (disabilities, environmental, sustainable/local farming, etc.)
- Financial strength (supported by numerous local foundations)
- The facility, grounds and environment are welcoming & inclusive
- Highly visibility in the community, which has created strong partnerships
- The mission and programs are inclusive
- Strong grower program that promotes skill development for all levels
- Strong volunteer program that meets the needs of both volunteers and the farm
- Quality of our produce is excellent; high demand for local and organic produce

Similarly, the group reflected on and identified areas of concern where problems might inhibit the organization from moving forward. In addition to brainstorming problems, the group also voted for/prioritized the problems that they believed would have the biggest impact on Red Wiggler's ability to successfully move forward. The most significant problem areas are listed below.

- Setting/defining clear expectations for program outcomes
- Growing and sustaining our donor base
- Prioritizing workflow and resources (trying to do too much with minimal resources)
- Overcoming natural resistance to changes – a tendency to do things 'as we always have'
- Inability (to date) to bring in new parties/collaborators
- Creating a deeper staff bench, and creating mechanisms for staff knowledge transfer with turnover
- Better public relations, messaging, and strategic communications

Our Results

Using the aforementioned drivers as inputs, we developed a list of the most crucial issues facing RWCF in the short- and long-term. We determined that we need to (in no particular order):

- Engage strong partnerships and collaborations to sustain the farm.
- Ensure high quality programming that aligns with the RWCF mission and purpose.
- Develop a strong management and staffing infrastructure that supports the RWCF's mission.
- Ensure the long-term financial sustainability of RWCF.
- Continue to research new ways of doing things (create a culture of inquiry and innovation).

Path Forward: 2015 and Beyond

We believe that these five high-level strategic goals, guided by our shared vision, will direct our work in different ways over the next three years. To ensure our approach remains thoughtful, meaningful, and successful, we will work to prioritize and identify the actions that will lead us to success in the first year. The strategic objectives listed below are in draft form and will be revised upon further discussion with the Board.

Our intent is to accomplish the goals and objectives set out in this plan by February 28, 2018. We acknowledged the importance of continued discussion to determine additional actions needed to accomplish our goals and objectives. In the early winter of 2016, the Board and staff will re-convene to review progress and to set the stage and action priorities for 2016 and beyond.

GOAL 1: Engage in strong partnerships and collaborations to sustain the farm.

Year 1

- Objective 1.1: Define and assess our communities (Clarksburg, Farming, Developmental Disability, Environmentalists, Sustainability advocates, etc..) by developing a stakeholder touch point map (who are our stakeholders and how deep are the relationships)
- Objective 1.2: Explore lease amendments or extension with the Park (determine what we are going to do about the well and the back 4 acres).
- Objective 1.3: Continue to execute the 20th year anniversary strategic marketing plan and develop suggestions for the 25th year.
- Objective 1.4: Update the RWCF Strategic Communication Plan (conduct a communication audit).

Year 2

- Objective 1.5: Explore current offerings and identify and connect with other partners in the community who can support these efforts (communicate existing opportunities and explore new ones).
- Objective 1.6: Develop an outreach/awareness plan to better connect with our communities of choice.

Year 3

- Objective 1.7: Develop a partnership diversity plan.

GOAL 2: Ensure high quality programming that aligns with the RWCF mission and purpose.

Year 1

- Objective 2.1: Define distribution philosophy (% of distribution to support low income families).
- Objective 2.2: Prioritize & define our mix of programs (CSA, Grower Experience, Youth & Education, Technical Assistance/Consulting) and develop a logic model for each program.

Year 2

- Objective 2.3: Define outcomes measures (informed by the logic models) for each program. *Outcomes should address: how we impact people's lives; the financial sustainability of the program; inclusion; and environmental sustainability.*
- Objective 2.4: Evaluate the effectiveness of current programs and determine whether to continue them.
- Objective 2.5: Identify new program offerings and determine whether to initiate them in lieu of or in addition to current program activities.

GOAL 3: Develop a strong management and staffing infrastructure that supports the RWCF's mission.

Year 1

- Objective 3.1: Examine the organizational structure and define missing roles and responsibilities, as well as places where people are overstretched and need support.
- Objective 3.2: In the short term, examine current resources and workflows to identify immediate actions to sustain current high-quality staff performance.
- Objective 3.3: Develop a long-term succession plan by documenting key processes and cross-training staff where appropriate.
- Objective 3.4: Assess the staff compensation structure and need for change and make appropriate recommendations.

- Objective 3.5: Create a Board development plan that addresses governance philosophy, recruitment strategies, Board education, etc.
- Objective 3.6: Be an employer of choice – a great place to work.

Year 2

- Objective 3.7: Develop an advisory Board to help with corporate funding and outreach.
- Objective 3.8: Develop and implement a recruitment plan (to include funding concerns) to address both short-term and long-term staffing needs.

GOAL 4: Ensure the long-term financial sustainability of RWCF.

Year 1

- Objective 4.1: Evaluate current program pricing to determine whether it is competitive with similar offerings elsewhere.
- Objective 4.2: Assess the current financial structure (i.e. mix of sales, individual giving, grant and event money) and determine the best mixture to grow and sustain funding.
- Objective 4.3: Explore new/commercial sponsorships for events.
- Objective 4.4: Explore new events that would enhance community awareness of the farm (e.g. house parties and onsite events) and new ways to carry them out (e.g. engage Board members and other partners).

Year 2

- Objective 4.5: Develop and execute a plan to attract a broader number of potential individual givers. *This is dependent on the stakeholder map and strategic communication plan.*
- Objective 4.6: Develop relationships with local businesses that might be interest in being corporate funders. *This is dependent on the stakeholder map and strategic communication plan.*

GOAL 5: Continue to research new ways of doing things (create a culture of inquiry and innovation) and develop a strategy to assess the cost/benefits of each of these opportunities.

Year 1

- Objective 5.1: Explore offering training for adults with developmental disabilities (vocational training/internship program to allow them to prepare for employment at other farms)
- Objective 5.2: Finalize the facilities/space plan
- Objective 5.3: Engage the Park in discussion around creating a Community Garden
- Objective 5.4: Make a decision as to when and how to go about becoming LEED

certified

- Objective 5.6: Explore where Red Wiggler is in relation to the Maryland Standards for Excellence and determine next steps
- Objective 5.7: Engage the Park regarding the use for the Historic House
- Objective 5.8: Research sponsored housing for staff & interns
- Objective 5.9: Attend farmers markets (have a booth with information and produce, if possible)

Year 2

- Objective 5.10: Develop a flower CSA
- Objective 5.11: Develop a Friends of Red Wiggler program
- Objective 5.12: Develop a line of Red Wiggler Products
- Objective 5.13: Determine the feasibility of going to schools (as opposed to only having the school groups come to us)
- Objective 5.14: Explore more ideas to expand the winter program
- Objective 5.15: Focus on season extension (high tunnels)
- Objective 5.16: Develop a therapeutic horticulture program (low impact/senior/transition program)

Year 3

- Objective 5.17: Research onsite housing for staff & interns
- Objective 5.18: Decide if, when and how to transform Red Wiggler into a Permaculture/Holistic Farm (animals, fruit, recycled water, etc...)
- Objective 5.19: Develop a clear technical assistance plan so that our farm can be replicable in other locations
- Objective 5.20: Be more sustainable (i.e. collect rainwater, solar panels, and other natural resource issues)
- Objective 5.21: Create an aquaponic program