Farming Smarter

5-Year Strategic Plan

Adopted by Board @ Feb. 25, 2016 meeting

Background

Farming Smarter is a young organization with deep roots in southern Alberta crop production. It grew from a soil conservation association and an agricultural research association that saw a benefit to working together. That opportunity proved to be an excellent partnership that evolved – Farming Smarter.

2015 Grain corn agromomy trials at Farming Smarter research site.

Now, it reflects the values and experience of its origins as it grows into a strong organization enabling southern Alberta farmers to prosper. Farming Smarter focuses on regional research projects that improve or enhance efficient management and leading-edge production practices. These efforts provide local solutions to improve profitability and generational endurance of farm businesses.

The success of the original partnership fosters an open attitude within Farming Smarter toward partnerships that achieve useful advancements in all areas of its core mandate; which is to provide the information southern Alberta farmers need to be progressive businesses in Canadian agriculture.

Farming Smarter believes that unbiased research leads to trusted results; that open communication provides mutual benefits and that partnership moves the whole region forward together.

Vision

To grow agriculture through leadership, innovation and collaboration.

Mission

To support profitable, environmentally sound agriculture by creating innovative opportunities, adapting to emerging issues and disseminating unbiased information.

Strategic Goals

Enhance the recognized value and reputation of Farming Smarter in the agriculture industry.

Increased dissemination of information gathered from quality, unbiased applied research.

Actively identify issues to ensure Farming Smarter's work is cutting edge and relevant to Southern Alberta producers.

Build sufficient capacity within Farming Smarter to fulfill our vision.

Values

The organizational values reflect our beliefs and ideas about what kind of goals members of our organization should pursue, and our ideals about the appropriate kind and standard of behavior our members should use to achieve these goals. It is a declaration about how Farming Smarter will value members, funders, and other stakeholders.

Relevant			
	Creative/Innovative		Impactful
Open		Responsive	
	Adaptive		Professional
Impartial/Unbiased		Accountable	
			Cooperative/Collaborative

2015 Field School

AREAS OF FOCUS

1. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Goal:

Differentiate various groups of membership and enhance the benefits to the different groups, in order to build meaningful and reciprocal relationships with members, to enhance the long term growth of Farming Smarter.

Review and redefine the organizational structure to meet the changing environment the organization will be operating under in the future to address the following topics:

Membership

- Enhance the definition of membership to embrace the concept of members vs friends of the organization.
- Clarify the concept of ownership in the organization
- Continue to look for opportunities to make members more engaged
- Address the area of how to get member support
- Continue to ensure stay relevant to all members
- Clarify the following:
    - How the enhanced definition will help move Farming Smarter forward
    - How will this help drive research
    - Goals for each group
    - Benefits for each group
    - How do you utilize both groups
    - Should we charge membership fees
    - How to integrate the expanded definition into governance
    - How will this assist in growth of membership

2. CAPITAL

Goal:

Develop five year organization structure and capital plan to reflect the growing needs of the organization and strategic partnerships that are currently available to the organization.

- Identify current needs related to facilities and equipment
- Prioritize timing of purchases based on need and as funding becomes available
- Develop long term strategy related to facilities including:
- Current location limitations
- Possibility of need for more locations in the future based on research opportunities
- Consideration of opportunities with strategic partners
- Consideration of impact on annual operating budget as organization expands

3. RESEARCH

Goal:

Be proactive and comprehensive in our approach to identifying, prioritizing, and performing unrestricted research, to be responsive to various membership groups in order to enhance on farm profitability and best management practices, in addition to existing research opportunities.

Develop protocols around assistance and funding of projects through the research fund.

Develop a plan to expand research opportunities based on a strategy consistent with the funding model to enhance funding of the organization without restrictions, or timing constraints in order to be more strategic and responsive to member needs.

- Develop long term strategy for the possibility of research chair positions either within the organization or with strategic partners.
- Timing of plan to be dependent on funding model success
- Alow for opportunity for membership and Board to give input into research needs
- Develop list of projects and prioritize
- Develop longer term research policy

4. BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Goal:

Guide and ensure the long term success of Farming Smarter from balanced representation of the various membership groups and regions through advocacy, fund development, and strong active governance.

Active governance involves enhancing the role and responsibilities of the board including the following:

- Meeting agenda items defined before each meeting
- Regular meetings
- How to ensure all board members are able to come prepared for meetings
- Pro-active role of the board in implementation of the strategic plan
- More clarity around the role of accountability of the board
- Increase board member knowledge of day-to-day operations
- Regular review of the skill set of board members to assess gaps in expertise to assist with board succession and identify which key partnerships may be required to bring the necessary skills to the board or the organization as a whole.
- Look at the development of a new board member manual
- More clearly define the board's role in regards to advocacy and develop an implementation strategy.

5. FUNDING GROWTH

Goal:

Enhance the stability and flexibility of Farming Smarter by doubling the annual revenue to $3 million in 5 years, through a focus on enhanced contributions and fees from membership, access to research and legacy funding, aligning with key strategic partners and effective use of the registered charity, in addition to ongoing events and funding sources.

Develop a plan to be less dependent on government and specified or restricted funding to allow the organization to be more responsive to the needs of the members.

- Plan for day when no government funding
- Registered Charity Status
- Develop protocols to establish an endowment fund for research
- look at ways to use the charity to attract funding
- Enhance the organization's knowledge of the rules around registered charities
- Look into possible amendments to the by-laws and policies to facilitate the use of the charity in the funding model of the organization
- Develop clear reporting structure
- Develop communication strategy to contributors
- Develop donor recognition strategy
- Crowd funding projects
- Undesignated donations
- Donations for specific capital purchases
- Legacy funding

Strategic partnerships

- Align with organizations that have shared goals
- Review of Lethbridge College contract and current opportunities both from a facilities perspective and a programs and research basis
- Look at other possible strategic partnerships and develop a pursuit plan to actively go after opportunities that may present themselves
- University of Lethbridge
- University of Alberta
- Other agriculture related non-profit orgs e.g. commissions, producer groups sponsorship packages
- Other levels of Government and future program funding

Lethbridge College students help with hemp harvest. Farming Smarter & Lethbridge College have a working partnership.