

Foothills Farmers' Market Consultancy Project

Board Recruitment and Development



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Background and Organizational Purpose

- Foothills Farmers' Market (FFM) is a grower-certified farmers' market
- Cleveland County, North Carolina
- FFM operates as a 501(c)(3) organization and is governed by a Board of Directors (BOD).
- FFM was started in 2009 with Cleveland County Cooperative Extension organizing the effort.
- The mission of FFM is to be a grower-certified market that provides community access to the freshest local foods available anywhere.





Organizational Challenge



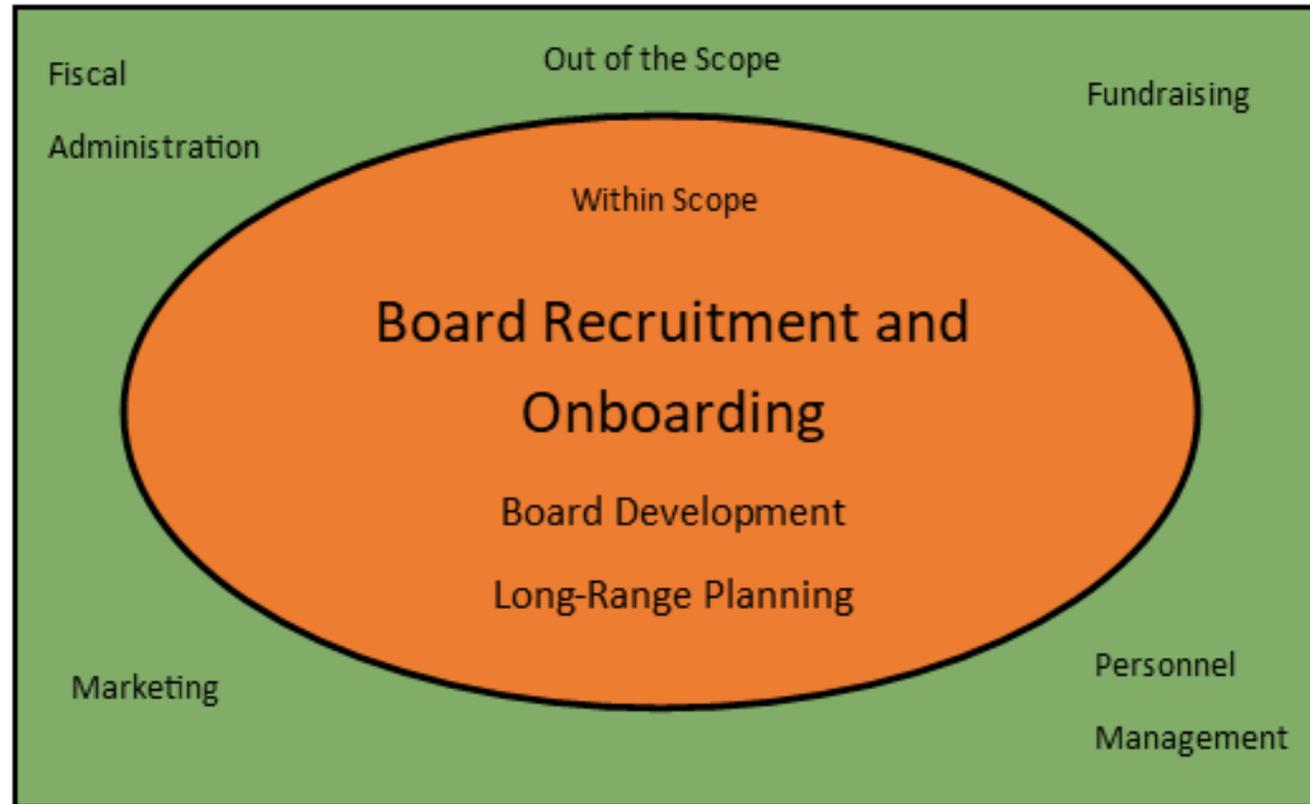
- By 2017, FFM had experienced rapid growth in sales, grant funding, and programs while experiencing highs and lows in volunteer Board leadership.
- The organization needed very committed volunteer Board members who would put in the time to run the small nonprofit business.
- Board members were becoming less committed as the demands of the organization became greater.
- The lack of engagement became especially apparent when there was not a quorum at Board meetings and no business could be conducted.



What Do Top Nonprofit Organizations Need?

- A strong strategic orientation
- A culture of self-assessment and accountability
- Healthy attention to board recruitment and development

SCOPE of WORK



The scope of work for this consultancy project included work to improve processes for Board Director recruitment as well as onboarding. Board development and long-range planning were secondary and a smaller focus of the project.



Approach

- Recruit
 - Board member Suggestions
 - Social Media Announcements
 - Frequent Shoppers
- Clear Expectations
- Applications
- Vetting
- Voting
 - By Membership
 - By Board





Project Timeline

Timeline	Summer 2017	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Summer 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019	Summer 2019	Fall 2019
Develop an Action Plan to recruit 5 vetted candidates for the Foothills Farmers' Market (FFM)	Orange	Orange						
Create a Board of Directors Notebook for new Board members		Orange	Orange					
Along with a Board Development committee, plan a 2-hour Board Orientation workshop for new Board Members			Orange			Orange		
Provide on-going Board Development segments at monthly Board meetings	Light Orange							
Work with a committee to develop a long-range plan for the Board of Directors including a succession plan for officers, the sustainability of staff, and long-range goals (Next Stage Consulting)				Green	Green	Green	Green	Green



Risks and Constraints

Risks

- Poor Recruiting: Board does not recruit, recruits but takes whoever they can get, or certain Board members recruit only who they want
- Recruiting Failure: Board cannot get enough interested people to serve
- FFM Board gives no attention to Board Development. Board service is not an engaging or satisfying experience
- FFM Board gives no attention to the changing needs of the vendors, the customers, or the community
- Board gives no attention to long-range planning

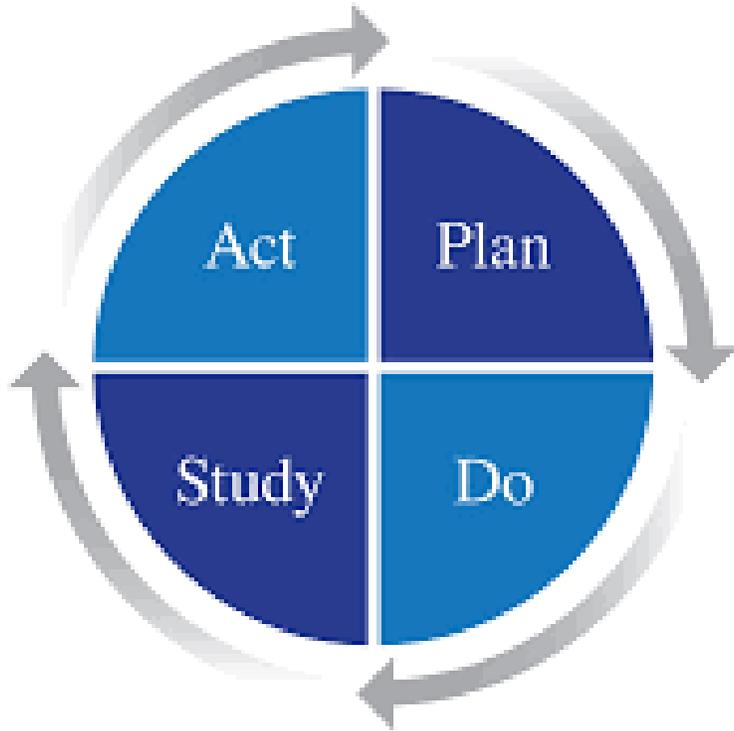
Constraints

No Major Constraints

Slight Constraints

- 4 months of intense focus with Next Stage Consulting on a new strategic business plan
- Bylaw adjustment needed to amend BOD voting procedure

Quality Assurance Plan



- Plan your initiative or project.
- Do or implement the project.
- Study and analyze the outcomes.
- Act by adjusting your project based on what you learned.

Repeat as many times as is useful.



Results

- FFM information and Board member expectations are given to each interested person. All candidates are vetted for interest, ability, and commitment.
- Full cohorts in 2018 and 2019 for BOD positions.
- 2 years of orientation sessions for new Board members with Board notebooks.
- Officers elected in 2019, after a year without officers.
- New strategic business plan adopted in December 2018 after 4 months of work with Next Stage Consulting.
- Significant increase in Board member engagement.
- Board business is conducted more effectively with a full and engaged BOD.



Reflections

What I Learned

I like diagnosing the Challenge

PDSA gives you a chance to improve

Multi-year projects take fortitude

Clear expectations and communication are critical for successful project management!

Fail, Fail Early, and Fail Forward!

Collaborative work is vital to Nonprofit success!

What I Would Do Differently

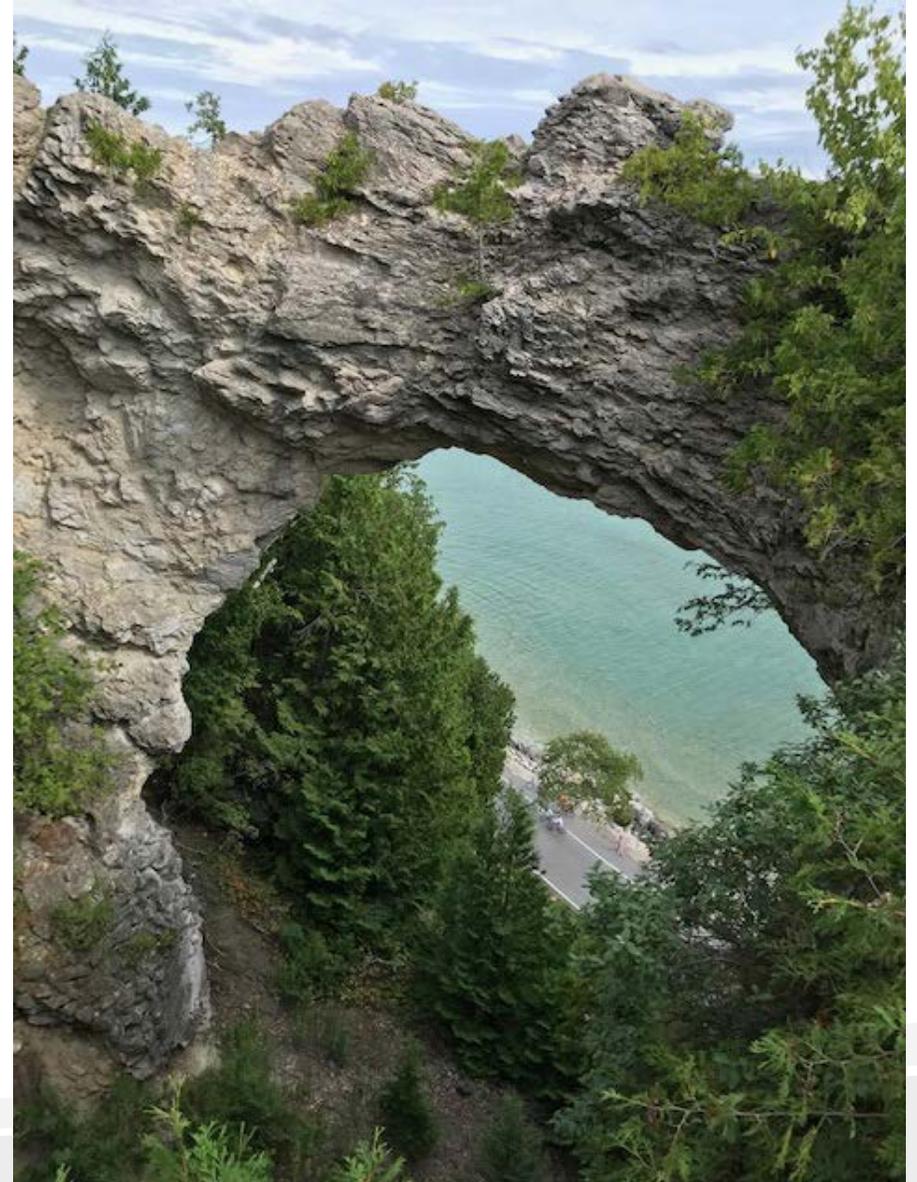
Take better chronological notes of the project.

Ask a Board member to work closely with me in every step of the recruiting process.

Look for additional ways to gather and incorporate data.

Areas for Future Study

- Project Management
- Nonprofit Board Governance
- Volunteer Motivation and Team Motivation
- Competing for Charitable Dollars





Bibliography

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