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Oregon Tilth, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports and promotes biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture through education, research, advocacy, and product certification.

Oregon Tilth Board Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 16th, 2014
5:00-7:00 PM

Board Members Attending:

Lynn Youngbar
David Granatstein
Steve Crider
Ryan Wist
Meta Loftsgaarden

Staff Attending:

Connie Karr
Erin O'Donnell
Kettie Adams (taking minutes)
Chris Roddy
Chris Schreiner

Members/Public Attending:

Gay Timmons, member & MAC Chair
Steve Patty, Dialogues in Action

Introduction & Agenda Review

No comments from public.

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes of 8/19/14 meeting
2. G-6 – Board members Code of Conduct (*removed from consent agenda*)
3. Agenda for Annual Meeting
 - Steve moved to approve board meeting minutes and annual mtg agenda on consent agenda. Meta seconded. **Four in favor, one abstention, motion passes. (4-0-1)**
 - **ACTION ITEM: Revisit G-6 code of conduct policy at future meeting**

Executive Director's report for September

- McKnight foundation awarded a second large grant to help cover partnership with USDA NRCS.
- Also awarded \$24K contract through USDA NOP. Outreach for value of organic certification. This is different than the USDA OREI award, which supports some of programming at Organicology.
- Work of Governor's GE task force is really picking up speed; first draft of report expected in early October, with submission of final report to Governor's Office in December.
 - Addressing issue from multiple angles – environmental, marketplace, contamination of non-GE crops, etc. Report will frame issues, share different perspectives, including areas of agreement and disagreement amongst task force members. Governor says he wants to see state of OR lead on this issue.

Chris Roddy's presentation on Communications Strategy Design:

- Introduction of Chris Roddy. Currently only at ½ FTE capacity, but has been getting a lot of work done.
 - Process included environmental scan, in-person meetings with various staff, competitor / partner scan, surveys completed by internal and external stakeholder groups, phone interviews and analytics.
 - Engagement is key to the communications team. 2 way flow of communication.
 - Key activities: identify stakeholders, set clear objectives, think clearer about the messages we put out there.
 - Communication aims (or tactics)- what we are we actually going to do. Nuts and bolts. Let's set some goals, do what we say, be selective about who we talk to and when.
 - Crisis communications planning - develop more formalized process to be able to respond more quickly.
 - Target stakeholders: Tier 1 - clients, memberships, partners, and funders. Tier 2- policy makers, consumers, and retailers.
 - Listen as much as we talk with groups that we consider to be important to OT success.
 - Q: What about tools to work more with tier 2 audiences?
 - A: Definitely a question that comes up. Heard desire for products / resources / services.
 - Q: How do we provide the types of messaging to draw new people in and maintain those relationships?
 - A: Key is having clear distinctions with how we communicate with whom.
 - Q: Have we scanned other groups with whom we could partner (or whose messages we might contradict or challenge) in messaging? Organic's reputation has been damaged by some organic advocacy / watchdog groups.
 - A: Yes, this is about how we confront landscape that we're presented with. Broad range of messaging out there regarding organic movement / industry. What is our perspective? Looking into opportunities. Partnership is a huge component on how we address things.
 - Compiling list of past, present and future partner possibilities.
 - What are our stakeholder needs? Motivators to get them excited. Not just throwing darts at the dartboard.
 - Not enough good stories. Response to negative. Need more representation of the good things! Overall, negatively-framed communication in marketplace currently.
 - Defining Objectives: Build capacity. Promote positives. Increase education. Cultivate partnerships.
 - Consider scientific advisory board as way to establish relationship w/ stakeholders. Could offer expertise and resources to back up our messages / claims.
 - Focal areas (themes): Certification, Conservation, Marketplace, Health, Policy
 - Strategic approaches we take: Education, Partnerships, Technical assistance, Grassroots engagement
 - Q: Concern about messaging regarding sustainability and organic. How do those relate?
 - A: Board has had conversations about this dynamic. Sustainability is a trendy term. We need to have a clear idea about what we mean by that. Pushing to put a message out there to stand behind. Say something to people that resonates. Clear, direct. Sample message: Organic certification provides access to economic opportunities.

- 10 aims: Develop stories that people can relate to, engage all involved in what we do, providing tools, model practices, investment, promote, organize
 - Sample aim: Promote OT as a national and international agency. Looks for stories to promote our work outside of the Pacific NW area.
- Next steps: Incorporate feedback, final draft of plan, collaboration and roll-out
 - It's not about perfection; it's about flexibility. Living document that will continue to be revisited.
- Q- Communications strategy design and organization strategic planning occurring at same time. Curious about objectives - what about bringing in new customers? How do communications and marketing fit together?
 - A: Real outcomes and goals are going out and increasing marketing practices. OTCO client growth could very likely be an outcome of communications strategy objectives. Growing the marketplace. Spurring investment through policy to increase funding in education, outreach and research.

Strategic Plan Update (Chris S. and Steve Patty):

- 3 phases of strategic planning
 - Get clear – refresh identity of OR Tilth; voice of stakeholders to inform
 - Get focused – Develop strategy
 - Get moving – plan priorities, initiatives and metrics / indicators of success
- Conducted in-depth stakeholder interviews. Steve preparing briefing paper, summarizing themes and key considerations.
- In summer, staff gathered to think through dialogue boxes. Board did same exercise.
 - Intended not be fully comprehensive but fairly thorough.
 - 4 species: Platform for strategic direction-
 - Ethics and feel
 - Core beliefs
 - How would the world be different because of OR Tilth?
 - The way we go about our work- when we do this, then this happens as a result.
- Review, submit responses, and collaborate to develop dialogue boxes. This will go to board retreat.
- Dialogue boxes synthesis work by Chris S.
 - Great ideas generated by board, staff and from interviews. Also referencing Roddy's communications strategy work. Validating his approach. Developing core themes and sample messages that align w/ larger strategic planning. Encouraging and helpful.
 - Identify common themes, reduce to core phrases.
 - In terms of giving feedback going forward- if something to you doesn't align or is missing, please let us know.
 - Reviewed final draft of different dialogue boxes and discussed decisions behind word choice and language used.
 - Feedback from board
 - Ultimate Aims (Box A). In all things, we are going to be the standard-setter. Tilth goes beyond the minimum. We set a high standard. Focus is less on certification and more about raising the bar.
 - Q: In boxes A and B, word certification is not used at all. Should that be woven in there more? A: Deep commitment to certification *because of* core beliefs and ethics outlined in boxes A and B. Certification is being linked to something bigger- integrity. Certification shows up a lot in subsequent boxes that move

closer to surface (activities / programs / initiatives) in iceberg metaphor.
Certification is a means / tool / tactic.

- Intended impacts (Box C):
 - Building healthy soil - what about other resources? Addressed through stewardship of soil, which is foundation to protecting other resources. Soil health links to organization name (tilth). Suggest using “land” instead of soil.
 - Supply chain and marketplace. – Suggest using simpler language “Growing the Organic Sector.” Also consider economic component, including concept of organic products being “affordable”
- Best Means (Box D) is strong and well done.
- **ACTION ITEM: Chris S. will take input and figure out how it fits into next draft to be vetted and adopted at October retreat.**

Board Recruitment Plan

- Lynn and John are on Board Nominations Committee tasked with recruitment. Have various leads they are pursuing. Reminder that recruitment is a year-round and all-hands effort.

Board work plan through end of 2014 and first quarter of 2015

- By-laws revision. John and Meta agreed to take the lead on this item. Plan for bylaws revision after the first of the year. Too many other priorities competing for limited time.

Budget for 2015

- Q: Do we need a special meeting to review budget concepts? A: Prefer to schedule in conjunction with existing meeting.
 - **ACTION ITEM: Chris S and Erin O will follow-up with Lynn Y and David G to discuss expectations and timing of budget concepts discussion with Board prior to presenting final budget for approval in December.**

Upcoming meetings

- Retreat dates Oct. 18th and 19th in Portland.
- Regular October board meeting date would be the following Tuesday (Oct. 21st). Move back to week of 27th? Same week as NOSB meeting, so may be difficult.
 - **Chris will send out doodle poll to see if alternate date is possible.**
- Annual meeting is Sunday Nov. 9th from 8:30-10am in conjunction with T40 conference.
 - **ACTION ITEM: Chris will send Board members email with link to T40 conference details and registration and attach reimbursement request form.**
 - We have funding in budget for board members to attend T40 conference, including travel expenses. Keep receipts and submit with reimbursement form.

Adjourn meeting