

 **Board of Directors Retreat | Meeting Minutes**

October 6-7, 2021
*Hybrid-Washington D.C.*

*DAY ONE*

**Directors Present**

Jenny Ahlen, Environmental Defense Fund; Sarah Alexander, Keystone Policy Center; David Bue, Pheasants Forever; Luisa Camargo, Mondelez; Sarah Fox, Nutrien; Keira Franz, National Association of Wheat Growers; Michelle French, ADM; Margaret Henry, PepsiCo; Diane Herndon, Nestle Purina Petcare; Brandon Hunnicutt, National Corn Growers Association; Mark Isbell, USA Rice Federation; Gary O’Neill, USDA NRCS; Jeremy Peters, National Association of Conservation Districts; Megan Weidner, Bunge; Jun Zhu, University of Arkansas

**Staff and Consultants**

Rod Snyder, Field to Market; Betsy Hickman, Field to Market; Allison Thomson, Field to Market; Jamie Richards, Field to Market; Ray Stewart, Thomson Coburn;

Motions

* *A motion was made by Diane Herndon and seconded by Sarah Fox to move the minutes from the consent agenda to amend separately. Motion carried.*
* *A motion was made by Sarah Alexander and Mark Isbell to approve the consent agenda including the two new member applications and one standing committee vacancy appointment. Motion carried.*
* *A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Diane Herndon to amend the August Board minutes to include Mark Isbell in the Directors Present listing. Motion carried*
* *A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Diane Herndon to approve the amended minutes from the August Board of Directors meeting. Motion carried.*
* *A motion was made by Diane Herndon and Sarah Fox to accept the resignation of Rod Snyder as president of Field to Market. Motion carried.*
* *A motion was made by Mark Isbell and seconded by Margaret Henry to hire Resonance Global with the request to reduce their overall budget to $120,000 and to include Dave Gustafson as a subcontractor on the Technology Roadmap for $10,000 with initial payments totaling $50,000 allocated from the Contingency Fund. Motion carried.*
* *A motion was made by Mark Isbell and seconded by David Bue to adopt the FY 2022 budget with an increase in dues revenue to total $2,120,000 and reduction in Professional Fees to total $626,000 as well as for the Board to review the budget after six months for any adjustments. Motion carried.*
* *A motion was made by Jeremy Peters and seconded by Michelle French to adopt the amended 2022-2024 Strategic Plan without the development of KPIs until a new president has been hired. Motion carried.*
* *A motion was made by Diane Herndon and seconded by Michelle French to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m. Motion carried.*

Next Steps and Action Items

* *Present the amended 2022-2024 Strategic Plan to the membership at the General Assembly meeting in November and allow the next president to develop the KPIs for the plan in January.*
* *Monitor and receive updates from the Keystone Policy Center on the hiring process and executive search for the next president of the Alliance. Key check-ins and updates will be coordinated through staff.*
* *Review the FY 2022 budget after six months and make any adjustments as needed.*
* *Convene a Board subgroup of Mark Isbell, Keira Franz, Megan Weidner and Margaret Henry to facilitate and review member and Field to Market comments related to the USDA Climate-Smart Agriculture Program.*

Proceedings

**Opening**

Board Chair, Brandon Hunnicutt called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Ray Stewart read the antitrust statement. Brandon reviewed old business from the August Board meeting.

**Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included review and approval of the meeting minutes from August, review and approval of two new member applications and the appointment of one person to the Education and Outreach Standing Committee.

New Member Applications

* The Andersons Inc. (Associate | Agribusiness)
* Indiana University (Affiliate)

Standing Committee Appointment

* Education & Outreach: Brent Rudolph, Pheasants Forever (Civil Society)

*A motion was made by Diane Herndon and seconded by Sarah Fox to move the minutes from the consent agenda to amend separately. Motion carried.*

*A motion was made by Sarah Alexander and Mark Isbell to approve the consent agenda including the two new member applications and one standing committee vacancy appointment. Motion carried.*

*A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Diane Herndon to amend the August Board minutes to include Mark Isbell in the Directors Present listing. Motion carried*

*A motion was made by Michelle French and seconded by Diane Herndon to approve the amended minutes from the August Board of Directors meeting. Motion carried.*

**Finance, Operations and Membership Updates**

Finance
Rod Snyder reviewed the financial statements through August 31 and reported cash on hand of $1,318,315 with revenue at $1,880,437 and expenses of $1,877,526. He noted that Field to Market was currently in the process of submitting the PPP loan forgiveness application and discussed projections for the remainder of the year.

Betsy Hickman updated the Board on the pending grant application to the Walmart Foundation for $250,000 over twenty-four months. She noted that if accepted, the funds would be received before the end of the year. Rod also discussed the NRCS Conservation Outreach: Racial Equity and Justice Conservation Cooperative Agreement grant opportunity with an application deadline of October 25. Staff are working with the DC Legislative and Regulatory Services contractor on developing and submitting an application.

Resignation of the President

Ray Stewart reviewed the proposed Board resolution officially accepting the resignation of the president which gives the authority to make necessary leadership changes with vendors and contractors. Upon adoption of the resolution the Chair and Secretary of the Board signed the resolution.

*A motion was made by Diane Herndon and Sarah Fox to accept the resignation of Rod Snyder as president of Field to Market. Motion carried.*

The Board discussed the transition and other administrative functions and implications during this time.

Executive Search Process

Sarah Alexander reviewed the proposed process and timeline for an executive search facilitated by the Keystone Policy Center. She noted there was no plan at the current time to hire an external search firm, however, did note the areas where the job listing would be posted and shared. The Board discussed the budget for the process and noted that Keystone had remaining funding from their contract facilitating the Cross Sector Dialogues for the year that would be applied to the overall $25,000. The Board discussed key attributes and skills needed in the next president as well as compensation, benefits, and location of candidates as key considerations during the hiring process. The Board was asked to share the job listing once it was posted and to make recommendations for qualified candidates.

**Strategic Plan Development for 2022-2024**

Rod reviewed the current dashboard and measures of success against current goals. Rod next presented the final recommendations for the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan to the board including key workstreams, financial considerations and changes to the current plan.

1. *Convene Diverse Stakeholders*- Convene diverse stakeholders to facilitate multi-sector collaboration, advance shared learning, and drive collective action in accelerating sustainable outcomes for nature and farmers.
	1. Provide transparent multi-stakeholder governance processes to ensure credible programs and initiatives
	2. Host ongoing events, including the annual Sustainable Ag Summit, biannual Plenary meetings, Cross-Sector Dialogue series and a Senior Executive Forum to provide opportunities for shared learning
	3. Develop strategic partnerships that lead to collaborative solutions for how the agricultural value chain can advance equity and inclusion for farmers of color and other underrepresented communities, especially within the context of sustainability initiatives
	4. Key Differences
		1. Revise Governance Structure – the Awards & Recognition Committee functions will be folded under the Education and Outreach Committee, The Innovative Finance Workgroup will become a permanent committee, the Verification Committee will become the Standards Committee, the selection process for standing committee participation will be based on Board appointments, the Board will consider additional ad hoc committees and workgroups on topics with immediate opportunities such as Public-Private Partnerships and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
		2. Increase Diversity - Develop strategic partnerships that lead to collaborative solutions for how the agricultural value chain can advance equity and inclusion for farmers of color and other underrepresented communities, especially within the context of sustainability initiatives
2. *Provide Science-Based Leadership*- Develop and strengthen Field to Market’s science-and outcomes-based resources for measuring sustainability performance, assessing opportunities for improvement, and bridging environmental and social science to catalyze positive change.
	1. Strengthen and maintain a common, science-based measurement framework to assess environmental impacts from commodity crop production
	2. Strengthen and maintain a robust data platform, including an application programming interface (API) to standardize and streamline data collection, analysis, and reporting
	3. Identify key research needs to improve measurement and/or benchmarking and communicate these gaps to the scientific community
	4. Enable a community of practice around the social science of sustainable agriculture to identify effective strategies to support farmers adoption of conservation practices
	5. Key Differences
		1. Update Technology Roadmap
		2. Support assessment across diverse rotations
		3. Enable a community of practice around social science
3. *Identify and Promote Innovative Incentive Strategies*- Strengthen capacity across the value chain to deploy effective incentive strategies to support farmers in scaling conservation adoption by addressing agronomic and financial risk of transition.
	1. Strengthen knowledge and capacity across our membership to deploy the right blend of incentives (e.g., financial, technical assistance and peer support) to meet farmers’ unique needs, risk tolerance and motivations.
	2. Create a standardized approach for how the broader industry can support farmers in evaluating the economic feasibility of the types of practices that may improve environmental outcomes.
	3. Deepen engagement with the financial community to strengthen relationships in service of mobilizing more catalytic capital and explore the development and deployment of innovative finance mechanisms that leverage matching funds from private sector, philanthropic organizations, and government.
	4. Key Differences
		1. Build Capacity – across membership to adopt the right blend of incentives to meet farmers’ unique needs, risk tolerance and motivations. This includes hosting workshops, developing resources and commissioning research as needed
		2. Align Economic & Environmental Assessment
		3. Expand Staff Expertise – hire one additional full-time staff person with ag finance expertise to help implement the key strategies under this pillar
4. *Scale Impact Through Partnerships*- Facilitate and scale pre-competitive partnerships across the value chain that deliver continuous improvement at the field, farm, and landscape levels.
	1. Expand staff support and digital tools for Continuous Improvement Project design, implementation, and reporting, and encourage companies with interest in shared geographies to pursue landscape-based approaches to collaboration.
	2. Increase documentation of Continuous Improvement Project learnings through case studies and make available through regular publications and educational opportunities for Field to Market members.
	3. Cultivate additional local partners and trusted advisers through outreach and training to support Continuous Improvement Projects and landscape level collaborations across supply chains.
	4. Key Differences
		1. Foster Landscape Level Collaboration
		2. Expand Local Capacity
		3. Share Learnings
5. *Enable Credible Communications*- Enable credible stakeholder communications that facilitate and improve supply chain and industry reporting, showcase leaders in sustainability, and strengthen public confidence in the food and agriculture system.
	1. Align with other strategic sustainability/regenerative programs and standards, including Scope 3 methodologies, to provide opportunities for additional recognition for participating farmers and supply chain entities.
	2. Develop a novel set of clearly defined principles and criteria for sustainable/regenerative agriculture at a farm and landscape level, including mapping how existing metrics and additional indicators can evaluate progress toward regenerative ag commitments.
	3. Feature and recognize exemplary growers, trusted advisers and Continuous Improvement Projects via Sustainability Leadership Awards and Spotlight program
	4. Key Differences
		1. Strengthen Scope 3 Recognition - Achieve alignment with Scope 3 reporting methodologies to provide additional recognition and value for farmers and supply chain companies participating in Continuous Improvement Projects.
		2. Establish Principles and Criteria - Develop a novel set of clearly defined principles and criteria for sustainable/regenerative agriculture at a farm and landscape level, including mapping how existing metrics and additional indicators can evaluate progress toward regenerative ag commitments.

Updated staffing/resourcing for 2022-2024 Strategic Plan

Rod reviewed the proposed resourcing needs to accomplish and lead the work in the next strategic plan:

* Senior Assurance Director role to shift to Program/Partnerships Manager to help support membership development and project implementation. Provides additional support to Program Director and Communications Manager who are currently overextended.
* VP of Stakeholder Engagement & Implementation will take over revised Verification Committee (renamed as “Standards Committee”) to oversee FTM’s process-based standard, claims protocols and our alignment with outside programs and standards.
* Technical consultant hired to support VP with alignment with Scope 3 protocols.
* Contractor hired for 12 months to support Racial Justice, Equity & Inclusion Workgroup to explore how the value chain can advance equity and inclusion for farmers of color and other underrepresented communities, especially within the context of sustainability initiatives.

Development of KPIs for 2022-2024 Strategic Plan

The Board discussed the KPIs under the current strategic plan as well as a way to review and evaluate them. The Board discussed presenting the new strategic plan to the membership without including KPIs to allow for further evaluation and development. The Board recommends that the next president be involved in developing the measures of success for the strategic plan.

**Update on Business Plan and Technology Roadmap**

Rod reviewed the project scope and timelines as well as the proposals received under the RFP. Resonance Global was selected as the contractor to oversee the Business Plan and Landscape Assessment with the recommendation to hire Dave Gustafson as an independent contractor to assist in the Technology Roadmap.

*A motion was made by Mark Isbell and seconded by Margaret Henry to hire Resonance Global with the request to reduce their overall budget to $120,000 and to include Dave Gustafson as a subcontractor on the Technology Roadmap for $10,000 with initial payments totaling $50,000 allocated from the Contingency Fund. Motion carried.*

**Review and Approval of Draft FY 2022 Budget**

Rod reviewed the narrative memo in conjunction with the budget worksheets for FY 2022, outlining major changes and considerations in the next budget. The Board discussed cash on hand for the remainder of FY 2021 and if there were any pre-payments for FY 2022 that would help balance the budget.

The Board asked for additional information on projections for the remainder of the year and determined to postpone a vote on the budget until the following day.

Day Two

Brandon reconvened the Board at 9:32 a.m.

Continued Discussion of Draft FY 2022 Budget and Proposed 2022-2024 Strategic Plan

The Board continued its discussion of the FY 2022 budget and potential revenue streams along with decreases in expenditures. The Board agree to pre-pay more for the Business Plan and Technology Roadmap in FY 2021 and remove that expense from the Professional Services line in the FY 2022 budget. The Board also recommended to increase dues revenue by $100,000 as part of the duties of the next president.

A motion was made by Mark Isbell and seconded by David Bue to adopt the FY 2022 budget with an increase in dues revenue to total $2,120,000 and reduction in Professional Fees to total $626,000 as well as for the Board to review the budget after six months for any adjustments. Motion carried.

2022-2024 Strategic Plan

The Board finalized its discussion of the proposed strategic plan and asked to amend the wording in pillar five from ‘develop’ to ‘explore’.

~~Develop~~ **Explore** a novel set of clearly defined principles and criteria for sustainable/regenerative agriculture at a farm and landscape level, including mapping how existing metrics and additional indicators can evaluate progress toward regenerative ag commitments

The Board agreed to present the strategic plan to the membership in November, demonstrating cohesion as the alliance moves forward.

*A motion was made by Jeremy Peters and seconded by Michelle French to adopt the amended 2022-2024 Strategic Plan without the development of KPIs until a new president has been hired. Motion carried.*

**Strategic Plan Implementation**Rod, Betsy and Allison Thomson reviewed the current work and programmatic updates through the current strategic plan.

1. Convene Diverse Stakeholders
	1. Update on November Plenary and Sustainable Ag Summit
	2. Membership recruitment updates – the Board discussed possible invitations and recruitment targets for the November Plenary.
	3. Feedback on Climate Commitment Compendium
	4. Upcoming report from Innovative Finance Workgroup
2. Provide Science-Based Leadership
	1. Update on publication of 2021 National Indicators Report
	2. MOU renewal with USDA NRCS for model services
	3. Opportunity for collaboration with Soil Health Institute on metric development
3. Scale Impact Through Partnerships
	1. Continuous Improvement Accelerator project enrollment updates
	2. USDA Climate-Smart Partnership Program
	Betsy reviewed the RIF and timeline of a potential program. The Board created a subgroup to facilitate and review comments from members and the Field to Market comments. The Subgroup members are Mark Isbell, Keira Franz, Megan Weidner and Margaret Henry. Betsy noted there was a call scheduled with USDA on October 15th as well as a member listening session on October 18th. The Board discussed the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program and what opportunities there might be for funding and piloting as well as the structure of this program and how it is different from regular conservation grants.
	3. Update on Continuous Improvement Academy and Data Analyst Training
4. Enable Credible Communications
	1. Scope 3 alignment explorations
		1. GHG Protocol piloting with WBCSD – budget requirements have yet to be determined. The Board discussed the implications of aligning here and that it could be an important next step for the Alliance’s credibility.
		2. Control Union CO2 Verified Program – ISO 14064 – Betsy discussed the proposal from Control Union and noted that Field to Market is committing $15,000 to seed fund the validation and needs an additional $15,000 to validate project data and map a project-level aggregation pathway.
		3. Gold Standard

The Board discussed which alignment opportunities would be available first and which would be a good investment of time and money to undertake. Rod noted that Control Union’s alignment is underway and based on member demand the other two alignments could take place in 2022.

* 1. Invitation to join the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosure (TNFD) Forum
	2. Update on 2021 Sustainability Leadership Awards
	3. Summary of media impressions ion 2021

The Board reviewed action items and key decisions from the meeting as well as upcoming meetings and events. For the Board elections in November, the following seats are up for re-election:

* Agribusiness – Michelle French
* Affiliate – Jun Zhu
* Brands & Retail – Diane Herndon
* Civil Society – Jenny Ahlen
* Grower – Keira Franz

*A motion was made by Diane Herndon and seconded by Michelle French to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m. Motion carried.*