



National Bison Association

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION
APRIL 2022 DENVER, CO

The mission of the National Bison Association is to bring together stakeholders to celebrate the heritage of American bison, to educate, and to create a sustainable future for our industry.

OVERVIEW

The Board, Executive Director, and Assistant Director of the National Bison Association (NBA) held a visioning and strategic planning retreat on Wednesday and Thursday, April 6 & 7, 2022, in Denver, CO. The NBA contracted with Tara Kuipers of Tara Kuipers Consulting in Cody, WY, to design and facilitate their work session.

The following agenda outlined the structure for the day:

- Welcome & Introductions
- DISCOVER Past, Present, and Future Trends and Opportunities
- DREAM of Possibilities and Identify Contradictions for the Future
- DESIGN Strategic Directions
- DEPLOY Actions and Resources

The following group expectations guided our interactions and conversations:

1. Respect
2. Courage and Candor
3. Future-Focused
4. Enjoy yourself!

INTRODUCTION: High Points & Conditions

HIGH POINTS: The group reported they have 299 (or more!) collective years of experience with the NBA through the preparation survey. To open the session, attendees introduced themselves by telling their "high point" or peak experience during those 299 years as members, board members, volunteers, or event attendees. High points include:

- Spirit of gratitude
- Smithsonian Celebration
- Today! This opportunity for organizational transformation
- Ongoing education
- Joining the board of directors
- Member/industry support for each other
- USDA's recognition of the bison industry
- The holistic approach of the industry
- Our efforts impact our future generations
- Fellowship, openness for international representative
- Moving toward 'mainstream'
- 2019 Conference - wasn't the "good ol' boys" club
- Having a "Bison Family"

CONDITIONS: Considering those high points or peak experiences, the group identified conditions that made those high points possible. These conditions, which have led to the high points listed, are essential reminders as this group plans for the NBA's future. The conditions include:

- Filled a need amidst a vacuum of resources
- Sense of collaboration, teamwork
- Tenacity and perseverance
- Passion for the industry, the animal, each other
- Leadership (board, directors) sets a positive, professional culture
- A desire for everyone to succeed
- A "Pioneer" or "Newcomer" mindset
- Love of the animal is uniting, motivating
- Sharing education; we are each an open book
- Integrity
- Profitability
- Selflessness and giving spirit
- Desire to leave a legacy

DISCOVER: Trends & Opportunities

The group broke into small groups to review and discuss the Member Survey, Lapsed Member Survey, the Strategic Planning Survey, and the Board Retreat Preparation Survey (the results are summarized below.) *Copies of member survey results are available in the "Resources" folder, linked on the final page of this document.*

PAST	
ACCOMPLISHMENTS	SETBACKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse and successful outreach • Training materials and educational opportunities, conferences • Robust membership growth • NBA is the 'hub' for all things bison • Growth fund • Ongoing public education • Growing market for bison meat/products • Strong presence and relationships in D.C. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing at or over capacity • Lack of diversity in association leadership • Magazine and database-related challenges • COVID (shutdowns, market challenges) • Market collapse and recovery of 2002 • Boom-bust cycles and lack of sustainability for producers

PRESENT	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged, active, diverse board & committees • Committed, knowledgeable, respected staff • Large and diverse membership while remaining 'personal' • Strong presence and relationships in D.C. • Successful events (show, conference, sale) • Growing consumer interest • Strong industry support • More educated consumers and producers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff capacity, training, and expectations • The organization structure doesn't match staff skills or association needs • Lack of clear focus and follow-through • Resources and events becoming "stale" • Little social media presence or direct outreach • Decreasing value for seasoned AND newer producers • Revenue and fundraising

FUTURE	
RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stagnant organization • Lack of value to members • Staff burnout/turnover • Organization structure • Retain and serve membership (both new & old) • Drought, disease, government regulations, and economic challenges • Public perceptions of meat, alt-meat, animal welfare • Bison becoming a commodity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in communications, social media • Excited board and qualified, talented staff • Membership growth • New events, programs for members and public • Bison's role in soil health, climate, regenerative ag • Leveraging NBA's good reputation, relationships • Succession planning and leadership transition • Partnerships and collaborations • New revenue streams: grants, events, education

DREAM: Possibilities for the NBA's Future

After reviewing the survey results and discussing themes and items of importance, the group discussed the future of the NBA and listed initiatives to be PRESERVED, CHANGED, or CREATED.

PRESERVE	CHANGE	CREATE
Government Affairs & Advocacy Local Legislation Bison World magazine Trading Board Membership Growth Winter Conference Technical Training Personal Connection & Community The integrity of the Species	Staff Utilization and Capacity Marketing & Growth Fund Communication & Social Media Development/Fundraising Efforts Summer Conference GTSS (Promotion & Format) Sponsor/Donor Recognition Job Descriptions Update	Financial Stability/Revenue Plan Liquidity of Animals Economic Literacy Accountability (board & staff) BOD Expectations, Onboarding

IDENTIFYING UNDERLYING CONTRADICTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

To continue moving toward the hoped-for vision of the future, the group also discussed the underlying contradictions or constraints that block progress. Underlying contradictions are limitations that arise from policies, systems, structures, patterns, habits, beliefs, or attitudes that impede forward movement. The contradictions and constraints identified by the group include:

- Western-centric organization and image of the industry ... **Is the NBA missing the population centers and, therefore, the growth potential in other parts of the country?**
- Conservative investment policies... **They have been valuable in decreasing risk and growing reserves, but should the focus be shifted toward increasing growth?**
- The board of directors serves on their own "time and dime"... **Would compensation or stipends allow the board to expand its pool of prospective board members and improve board performance?**
- People built NBA with an entrepreneurial, "pioneering" spirit ... **How do we create more formal structures and processes for the next stages of the NBA's lifecycle?**
- Collaboration is the best and only way to accomplish the NBA's large number of significant projects... **How does the decentralized, part-time, project-based structure allow for collaboration?**
- There is a need for greater accountability and follow-through... **What outcome metrics and job expectations are needed to lead to greater accountability?**
- The industry is facing challenging times... **How will the board respond with the needed bold, risk-taking mindset to move the NBA forward?**

DESIGN and DEPLOY: Expected Outcomes and Strategic Directions

ORGANIZATION RESTRUCTURE IDEAS

The board discussed several preliminary ideas for an organizational restructure to grow staff capacity and prioritize the organization's most vital work. As shown below, examples of the structure, full-time/part-time position possibilities, and tasks were discussed and designed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS		
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE		
	<p>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 1 FTE Overall organizational leadership Advocacy/Lobbying</p>	
	<p>BOOKKEEPER/ FINANCIAL SUPPORT 0.5 FTE?</p>	
<p>Donor and Revenue Development 0.5 FTE In conjunction with NBF</p>	<p>Marketing and Communications 0.5 FTE Social Media; Blog; Other Media</p>	<p>Member Services 1 FTE Convention; Merchandise; Education; Bison World; GTSS</p>

EXPECTED OUTCOMES: THE YEAR 2032

Considering what needs to be preserved, changed, and created to support the NBA's future, along with the contradictions and constraints to be addressed, the board identified what they expect to see changed or improved in the next ten years, by the year 2032, if these transformations take place. The expected outcomes include:

1. Profitability for producers is maximized
 - a. New markets are opened up to producers
 - b. Producers have better tools to utilize
 - c. Public awareness is growing more valuable and more targeted
2. The NBA is a self-sufficient and profitable organization
 - a. Membership is growing
 - b. NBA can capture and utilize data effectively
 - c. There is an elevated image of the association
 - d. Members have a 10X value for their membership;
 The organization has a 3X value for each full-time staff
 - e. Bison World is consistent, on-time
 - f. Communication and messaging are cleaner and high-quality

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

On the morning of Day 2, the board reconvened to continue their work on the strategic directions and, specifically, their executive director search process. The following strategic directions were defined as the INNOVATIVE (e.g., things that are not happening yet) and SUBSTANTIAL (meaningful, intentional, and consequential) actions for the NBA to move toward its desired future while addressing underlying contradictions or constraints.

#1: Hire Executive Director and Restructure the Organization	LEADERS:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Search, hire, and onboard a new executive director 2. Create a new organizational structure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Take into consideration the new executive director's skills and ideas b. Redesign the structure to improve NBA's capacity, with a particular focus on social media/communications, and donor/revenue development 	Board & Executive Committee
#2: Board and Organization Development	LEADERS:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and revise job descriptions to align with the new organization structure 2. Develop a performance review process for the E.D. and staff, based on updated job descriptions 3. Clarify and communicate board expectations <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a board member job description b. Consider an annual board evaluation 4. Better distribute the workload <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review and revise the NBA committee structure b. Clearly define the role and expectations of committee-board liaisons c. Consider compensation or stipends for board members and/or specific committee leadership roles 	Board & Executive Committee Executive Director
#3: Other Strategic Priorities	LEADERS:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure the remaining strategic priorities are maintained and prioritized. 2. As the first two priorities (above) are accomplished, ensure the following are brought into the organization's future plan of work: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Marketing b. Economic Literacy Education c. Bison Liquidity d. Sponsor/Donor Recognition e. Summer Conference f. GTSS Format and Promotion 	Kevin Ken Carie

RESOURCES

- Photos and resources (including member surveys and the draft agenda) for the NBA's April 2022 Work Session are found in this [GOOGLE DRIVE FOLDER](#)