



2013 - 2016 Strategic Plan

**Adopted by the Board of Directors
of
The Organic Growers School**

December 20, 2012

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MISSION

Organic Growers School inspires, educates, and supports people to farm, garden, and live organically.

VISION

Organic Growers School is the premier provider of practical organic education in the Southern Appalachians. We are building a mutually supportive network of prosperous farmers, productive gardeners and informed consumers engaged in creating healthy communities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We value

- **Quality** and believe that adhering to high standards ensures educational success and participant satisfaction.
- **Integrity** and believe that care and truthfulness in our words and actions advances organic farming, gardening, and living.
- **Accessibility** and **affordability** and believe that everyone deserves access to information and resources about how to grow organic food and to live a healthy life.
- **Practicality** and believe that OGS' role is to put useful information in the hands of people striving for a more sustainable life.
- **Community** and believe that strengthening local connections between people, food, and land builds our individual and collective resilience.
- **Organic farming and gardening practices** and believe that they benefit the grower, the community, the consumer, and the earth.
- **Growing Food** and believe that it empowers us to take more control of our lives and to make our communities more resilient

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS – 2013 - 2016

Over the next three years, the Organic Growers School will focus on the following strategic directions:

- A. **Farmers** – Provide programs specifically addressing the needs of farmers, helping organic farmers and aspiring farmers to thrive and prosper.

- B. **Gardeners** – Promote organic gardening by providing education and support for gardeners.
- C. **Organizational Capacity** – Strengthen the internal capacity and infrastructure of the Organic Growers School.
- D. **Organic Living** – Provide opportunities for consumers to gain information about the benefits of organic, eating local, and sustainable living.
- E. **Land Lab** – Prepare the groundwork for a Land Lab – a site for organic study, demonstration and hands-on learning.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, GOALS and OBJECTIVES

A. Farmers – Provide programs specifically addressing the needs of farmers, helping organic farmers and aspiring farmers to thrive and prosper.

	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Initiate?</i>	<i>finish?</i>
Goal 1: Strengthen and focus CRAFT services in WNC			
Objective 1: Redefine CRAFT service area			
	Staff		
a. Provide support for East Tennessee CRAFT to be more effective	ED, FPC	1/2013	4/2013
b. Evaluate feasibility of Upstate SC CRAFT program	FPC	1/2013	12/2013
c. Develop multiple WNC CRAFT networks	Staff, FEC	1/2013	1/2014
i.) Identify and develop locations in WNC to serve as CRAFT networks	FEC, FPC	1/2013	12/2013
ii.) Develop and provide training for farmers to serve as volunteer facilitators	FEC, FPC	3/2013	12/2013
Objective 2: Beef up CRAFT benefits to farmers			
	Staff		
a. Refine current benefits of CRAFT to farmers	FEC	1/2013	3/2013
b. Create farmer profiles on website	CC	1/2013	3/2013
c. Make CRAFT materials more accessible to members	FPC	6/2013	1/2014
Objective 4: Seek sustainable funding for CRAFT before BFRDP grant expires			
	ED, FPC, BOD	1/2013	12/2013

Goal 2: Provide services to first year or emerging farmers			
Objective 1: Develop a program for people interested in farming (“Path to Successful Farming”)			
a. Gather information to inform education and support vehicles	FEC, FPC	1/2014	6/2014
i.) Develop an online directory of who does what	FEC, FPC	6/2014	12/2014
ii.) Host semi-annual info events across the region (“So you want to be a farmer”)	Staff	6/2014	Ongoing
Objective 2: Develop a farmer-to-farmer mentoring program			
	FEC, FDP	1/2013	Ongoing
Objective 3: Refine and expand services of Apprentice Link			
	FPC, FEC	1/2013	Ongoing
a. Refine search function	FPC	1/2013	6/2013
b. Develop a system for program evaluation	FPC, ED	1/2013	3/2013
c. Reach out to a broader farmer audience	FPC, CC	1/2013	Ongoing

Goal 3: Expand services to experienced farmers			
Objective 1: Seek ways to fill gaps to help farmers overcome barriers – explore, evaluate, then implement when feasible	FEC		
a. Explore ways to link organic growers with land owners interested in organic stewardship of their land	FEC	1/2013	6/201
b. Explore models to link farmers and consumers	FEC	1/2014	6/201
c. Explore equipment & supplies sharing models and propose a pilot project	FEC	1/2014	6/201
d. Explore and publicize methods to increase capital for organic farmers	FEC	1/2013	6/201
e. Explore needs and interests of medium size farmers	FEC	6/2013	1/201
f. Explore ways to connect farmers to gardeners, providing economic opportunity for farmers	FEC	9/2013	6/201
Objective 2: Develop an annual winter farmer's conference	FEC, Staff	6/2014	6/201
a. Gather farmer ideas at 2013 winter roundtables	FPC, FEC	1/2013	3/201
b. Secure funding for staff	FPC, ED	6/2013	12/20
c. Test Concept	Staff	1/2014	3/201

B. Gardeners- Promote organic gardening by providing education and support for gardeners.

	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Initiate?</i>	<i>Finish?</i>
Goal 1: Continue to expand and improve the Spring Conference			
Objective 1: Reach a wider audience	SCC	9/2012	Ongoing
a. Integrate OGS's strategic goals into Conference content	SCC	9/2012	Ongoing
b. Develop partnerships with other community organizations to target content to new demographic groups	SCC	9/2012	Ongoing
Objective 2: Seek ways to generate more income for OGS via the Spring Conference	SCC, BOD	9/2012	Ongoing
a. Develop more educational modules at the conference that also generate income	SCC,	6/2013	9/2013
b. Continue to test and evaluate ways of encouraging spring conference attendees for financial support, converting attendees into year round supporters of OGS	ED, BOD	1/2013	ongoing
c. Seek grants and philanthropic donations to the conference as a whole	SCC	12/2012	Ongoing

Goal 2: Develop a profile of gardeners in the region for economic development and OGS program opportunity			
a. Research gardening in WNC (demographics, motivators, needs, and opportunities)	GEC	3/2015	12/2015
b. Determine best uses for study findings	GEC	1/2016	6/2016

Goal 3: Provide more opportunities to educate and inform active gardeners			
Objective 1: Provide more frequent training opportunities for gardeners and seek co-sponsorship and partners to reach a broad audience effectively	GEC	1/2015	Ongoing
a. Gather information from gardener audiences about good timeframes in the year for events, and about geographic regions in which our work is needed	GEC	1/2015	6/2015
b. Collaborate with partners and establish sites for workshops	GEC	6/2015	12/2015
c. Create an OGS ongoing workshop series for gardeners (CSA for growers, Gardener's CRAFT)	GEC	6/2015	12/2015
d. Add one additional event for gardeners per year, with the eventual goal of establishing ongoing events (contingent upon OGS having a physical home base)	GEC, Staff	TBD	TBD
Objective 2: Establish an organic component to the Master Gardener curriculum in 2-3 WNC counties	GEC		
a. Develop curriculum based on examples from other regions	GEC	1/2016	12/2016
b. Develop partnerships with Extension agents and others to incorporate curriculum where appropriate	GEC	1/2016	12/2016
Objective 3: Explore ways improve gardener knowledge, resource base, and understanding of their effect on farms and the local food economy	GEC	6/2015	Ongoing

Goal 4: Provide more opportunities to educate and inform non-gardeners, and promote gardening as an activity that anyone, anywhere can do			
Objective 1: Expand educational offerings to include easy, small, start-up gardening ideas	GEC, Staff	1/2013	Ongoing
a. Add offerings at the spring conference for non-gardeners, introducing ways to get started (such as plants in kitchens, patio gardening, and growing in alternative structures)	SCC	3/2013	Ongoing
b. Expand information on website about techniques for getting started (such as tips for growing in small spaces, WHY garden?, etc)	CC, GEC	1/2013	Ongoing
Objective 2: Develop packages or methods for gardeners to get started	GEC	1/2015	6/2015
a. Partner with nurseries, greenhouses, farmers and garden centers to offer "starter kits" or "victory garden kits" to the	GEC	1/2016	12/2016

C. Organic Living – Provide opportunities for consumers to gain information about the benefits of growing organically, eating local, and living sustainably.

Goal 1: Have a meaty webpage for consumers that is user friendly and information rich			
Objective 1: Develop a user friendly webpage (See <i>Organizational Capacity Strategic Direction, Goal 5</i>)	Staff	6/2015	12/2015
a. Engage a volunteer or dedicate a staff's persons time	Staff	6/2015	Ongoing
b. Research other consumer web pages	Staff (CC)	6/2013	12/2013
c. Define what is user-friendly	Staff, BOD	1/2015	3/2015
Objective 2: Ensure that our webpage focuses on answering consumer questions	Staff	1/2015	Ongoing
a. Determine what consumers want to know	Staff	1/2015	Ongoing
b. Create & use videos featuring CRAFT farmers promoting local organic farming (put a face on your food)	Staff	1/2015	6/2015
c. Incorporate useful and up-to-date links	Staff	3/2015	6/2015

Goal 2: Increase consumers' holistic understanding about organics			
Objective 1: Pilot a class about organics at a Community College, Co-op or other venue	CEC	1/2015	12/2015
Objective 2: Create a Speakers Bureau about organics (<i>could also be income stream for farmers</i>)	GEC, FEC	6/2015	12/2015
Objective 3: Provide point of sale material for organic tailgate market farmers that address organics as a holistic means to address health of environment, people, and economy--not just health of people.	FEC, Staff	1/2016	3/2016

D. Organizational Capacity – Strengthen the internal capacity and infrastructure of the Organic Growers School.

	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Initiate?</i>	<i>Finish?</i>
Goal 1: Explore development of an OGS office space or improved virtual space			
Objective 1: Analyze costs and benefits to OGS	Staff	1/2013	3/2013
a. Assess Board and staff perspectives – pros & cons	Staff	1/2013	
b. Assess opportunities for partnership	Staff	1/2013	Ongoing
c. Assess equipment usage	Staff	1/2013	3/2013
d. Research 2 - 3 potential sites to analyze costs	Staff	1/2013	3/2013
Goal 2: Increase Board engagement and improve OGS governance			
Objective 1: Review and update By-laws & Refine Committee Structure	Board	1/2013	6/2013
a. Define Board terms and limits	Board	6/2013	12/2013
b. Develop and/or re-visit Board policies such as Conflict of interest, Confidentiality, Whistleblower	Staff Board	6/2013	12/2013
c. Develop a Gardener Education Committee	Board	1/2013	1/2014
d. Develop Consumer Education Committee	Board	1/2013	1/2014
e. Expand committee membership to include volunteers, staff and board	Board	1/2013	Ongoing
f. Identify committee goals annually and revise committee descriptions.	Board	1/2013	Ongoing
Objective 2: Strengthen Board member recruiting cycle	Board	6/2013	12/2013
a. Refine nominating process	Board	1/2013	6/2013
b. Improve orientation process and materials	BOD	1/2013	6/2013
c. Refine board expectations and revise board agreement	Board	1/2013	6/2013
Objective 3: Strengthen Board functioning and explore the need for board training and development	Board	1/2013	Ongoing
a. Utilize and adhere to ground rules at each meeting	Board	1/2013	Ongoing
b. Adhere to Robert's Rules of Order, adopt decision-making tools to support	Board	1/2013	3/2013

c. Develop a format for easily tracking organizational progress, review quarterly	Staff	3/2013	Ongoing
d. Respond to any need for board training and development	TBD	TBD	Ongoing
Objective 4: Engage in fund development planning process and training	Board	1/2013	6/2013
a. Understand fund development plan	Board	1/2013	3/2013
b. Agree upon expectations that OGS has for board members	Board	1/2013	3/2013
c. Clarify Board expectations of Staff related to development	BOD, ED	1/2013	3/2013
Objective 5: Develop personnel policies	ED	1/2013	3/2013
a. Review other organization's policies and adapt as appropriate	ED	1/2013	3/2013
b. Develop procedures to support policies	ED	1/2013	3/2013

Goal 3: Maximize staff impact			
Objective 1: Determine staff accountability, responsibility and authority	BOD, ED	1/2013	3/2013
a. Decide on Staff Leadership (Executive Director position)	Board	n/a	12/2012
b. Finalize conversion of staff to employee status	Board, ED	n/a	1/2013
c. Revise job descriptions to reflect conversion from contractors to employees	ED	2012	1/2013
d. Develop an organizational chart that shows accountability, responsibility, authority	ED	1/2013	1/2013
Objective 2: Develop a staff growth plan	Staff	1/2013	12/2013
a. Outline a staffing plan - current, 3 year and 5 year plan with contingencies	Staff	6/2013	12/2013
b. Reconsider Communications Coordinator position, Education Coordinator position, website position, Organic "extension" agent	Staff	6/2013	Ongoing
Objective 3: Engage in staff development	Board, Staff	6/2013	Ongoing
a. Provide opportunities for staff to attend continuing education	Board	TBD	Ongoing
b. Strengthen linkages with the nonprofit community	Staff	6/2013	Ongoing
Objective 4: Use volunteers to advance the work of OGS	Staff	1/2013	Ongoing
a. Analyze ways that volunteers can be most effective	Staff	1/2013	Ongoing
b. Develop job descriptions for volunteer staff	Staff	1/2013	3/2013
c. Recruit, manage and support volunteers in addition to the spring conference	Staff	1/2014	Ongoing

Goal 4: Increase fundraising capacity and outreach			
Objective 1: Seek diversified funding sources from grants, individuals and businesses	Board, Staff	Ongoing	Ongoing
a. Improve and Revise the OGS case statement	ED	1/2013	3/2013
b. Begin cultivating and asking major donors	ED, BOD	6/2013	Ongoing
Objective 2: Develop fund development plan	ED	1/2013	6/2013
a. Analyze what we've tried – what worked, what didn't	ED, BOD	1/2013	3/2013
b. Identify fund development goals for 2013 & 2014	ED, BOD	1/2013	6/2013
c. Provide training for board and staff	BOD	6/2013	12/2013
d. Set expectations for board and staff	Board, Staff	1/2013	6/2013
e. Reach out to partners with connections	Staff	6/2013	12/2013
Goal 5: Beef up the OGS Website			
Objective 1: Renovate the OGS website, giving it a facelift to ensure it is visually appealing, and re-visiting structure to ensure it is functional and user-friendly	CC, Staff	1/2013	6/2013
a. Improve archiving and the search function so that existing info is more accessible	CC	1/2013	6/2013
b. Evaluate our blog and our website home page and their interaction	CC	1/2013	Ongoing
c. Input more vivid, meaningful graphics and educational video content	CC	1/2013	Ongoing
d. Feature live feeds of social media activity to encourage interactivity	CC	1/2013	Ongoing
e. Develop a glossary of definitions	Staff	6/2013	12/2013
f. Adapt CRAFT materials for other OGS users	FPC, FEC	1/2014	12/2014
Objective 2: Increase gardener content (see Gardener Strategic Direction, Goal 5, Objective 2)	GEC, Staff	1/2014	Ongoing
Objective 3: Increase consumer content (see Organic Living Strategic Direction, Goal 1)	CEC, Staff	1/2015	Ongoing
Objective 4: Develop and fund staff 1 position that focuses on web	ED	1/2013	6/2013

Goal 6: Manage financial resources			
Objective 1: Improve financial systems that support OGS's growth	FC	1/2013	Ongoing
a. Update financial reporting system that interfaces seamlessly with donor growth and donor tracking	ED	1/2014	Ongoing
b. Refine financial policies and procedures	FC	1/2013	6/2013
c. Analyze moving from cash basis to accrual basis to help manage multi-year grants	FC, BOD	1/2013	12/2013
Objective 2: Monitor expenditures and revenues	FC	1/2013	Ongoing
a. Develop a system for reviewing and amending the annual budget	FC	1/2013	3/2013
b. Review finances at every Board meeting (i.e. P & L, Year to date, Grant update) extra space	Board	1/2013	Ongoing
c. Conduct annual OGS finance overview	Board	1/2013	Ongoing
d. Review financial statements and IRS 990	Board	6/2013	Ongoing
Objective 3: Maintain financial reserve at percentage of annual expenses or a specific number of months	FC	Ongoing	Ongoing
a. Set amount annually	FC	1/2013	Ongoing
b. Monitor monthly	FC, ED	1/2013	Ongoing

E. Land Lab – Prepare the groundwork for a Land Lab – a site for study, demonstration and development.

	<i>Who?</i>	<i>Initiate?</i>	<i>Finish?</i>
Goal I: Develop a shared vision within OGS of a Land Lab			
Objective 1: Hold a series of meetings with full Board and staff to develop a shared vision for Land Lab	ED	1/2013	6/2013
a. Identify key strategic questions	Board, Staff	1/2013	6/2013
b. Discuss future possibilities and business models	Board, Staff	1/2013	6/2013
c. Develop a “white paper” about Land Lab	ED, Staff	6/2013	12/2013
Objective 2: Develop 3 levels of plans with hypothetical layouts (based on financial range) and include programs, incubator, demos and research	Staff	1/2014	6/2014

Goal 2: Develop relationships and partners who share OGS's vision for a Land Lab			
Objective 1: Have strategic meetings with key "early adopters"	Staff	6/2013	Ongoing
a. Seek relationships with Land grant institutions	Staff	TBD	
b. Seek out like minded non-profits	Staff	TBD	
c. Seek out regional and national philanthropists	Staff	TBD	
Objective 2: Develop plan to bring key partners together as a unit	Staff	TBD	
Goal 3: Develop a long-term sustainability plan			
Objective 1: Seek funds to cover costs of staff time in development phase	Staff	1/2015	6/2015
Objective 2: Seek funds for maintenance of land and program development	Staff	TBD	

ORGANIC GROWERS SCHOOL HISTORY

The Organic Growers School is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that grew out of the volunteer efforts of a group of farmers and extension specialists who, in 1993, gathered to discuss the need for nuts and bolts, region-specific crop growing information applicable for farmers in Western North Carolina. From this meeting, OGS was born, along with a mission to deliver practical information about organic agriculture at a reasonable price.

The first Organic Growers School Spring Conference was held in 1993, with just over 100 participants. Since then, the event has grown exponentially. In 2012, 1906 farmers, gardeners, educators, students, consumers, and chefs gathered from over 18 states and Canada, making the OGS Spring Conference the largest event of its type in the Southeast.

In addition to a successful Spring Conference, the OGS offers educational opportunities for organic farmers all year long through our farmer education initiative. CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training) in both western NC and eastern TN gathers farmers and their workers together for peer-to-peer, hands on learning about farm production and business management. Apprentice Link matches farmers to farmworkers and offers consultation about structuring labor on the farm.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In March 2012, Organic Growers School embarked on a strategic planning process by forming a Board and Staff Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and engaging a planning consultant, Judy Futch, Judy Futch Consulting, Inc. The SPC identified key questions and key stakeholders. Board and staff members interviewed 38 key stakeholders over a 6-week time period. Board and staff members gave their views via a confidential survey. The SPC analyzed the data and developed a summary of the results that was used at the Board and Staff Planning Retreat, September 2012. Board and staff reviewed and drafted the mission, vision, guiding principles, strategic directions, goals and objectives. The SPC refined the material developed at the retreat and the Board and staff reviewed and refined the material in a series of Board meetings held October and November 2012. The Board adopted the plan conceptually on November 5th, 2012, and it was published in final on December 20th 2012

STRATEGIC PLANNING AGREEMENT

The plan represents the commitment of the Board of Directors to the mission, vision, guiding principles and organizational goals and objectives. The Board recognizes that active governance, oversight, and participation are required. Staff is committed to developing well-defined action plans, monitoring the plan and adapting it as needed to fulfill the strategic directions outlined in this plan.

Ruth Gonzalez, Board President

Date

Meredith McKissick, Executive Director

Date

OGS Board Members

Kathryn Beattie
Rodney Bowling
Vanessa Campbell
Jeanine Davis
Joan Engelhardt
Tom Elmore
Ruth Gonzalez
Lynn Morningstar

OGS Staff Members

Cameron Farlow
Meredith McKissick
Beth Trigg
Karen Vizzina