NASDA Members:

American agriculture is not only the backbone of rural communities and the modern food system, but also provides the essential function of feeding, fueling and nourishing people worldwide. Through the enclosed strategic plan, NASDA has a roadmap for engaging others in this critical story, thereby growing and enhancing American agriculture.

At its core, strategic planning is about answering three basic questions: Where are we now as an organization? Where do we want to be? And – most importantly – how are we going to get there? To answer these questions, NASDA engaged Nuffer, Smith, Tucker to carefully design a strategic planning process that allowed for both member and staff input. You can learn more about the process on Page 3.

The resulting plan is one that builds off past successes of the organization. In recent years, NASDA improved its financial stability, established a solid framework for governance, grew in-house staff expertise and gained significant traction in positively impacting food and agricultural policy.

The current plan will take these successes even further with a focus on four priorities: government affairs, membership engagement and education, partnerships and public outreach. Through these priorities NASDA will be the nonpartisan, credible eyes, ears and voice of its members in Washington, provide even more member value, engage with others to support our vision and help elevate the importance of American agriculture.

The plan you see here is ambitious, setting aggressive goals for success – but we’re up for the challenge. This plan will be the foundation for all of NASDA’s work moving forward. It will not live on a shelf, but rather guide our actions day in and day out as we seek to provide even more value to our members and expand our influence and results.

Thank you for your continued investment and support of NASDA, and for your ongoing leadership in your individual states.

Regards,

Doug Goehring
Commissioner, North Dakota Department of Agriculture
President, NASDA

Ryan Quarles, Ph.D.
Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Agriculture
Vice President, NASDA

Barb Glenn
Chief Executive Officer, NASDA

COVID-19 Impacts

The strategic planning process started prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted all facets of agriculture throughout the country. With the spread of the virus, agriculture felt a multitude of immediate impacts and, in many cases, this caused a shift of priorities to focus on the short term. With that in mind, NASDA’s 2020 activities may be adjusted to address the most pressing concerns of the states as it relates to the pandemic. In addition, the ability to achieve the SMART objectives as outlined may be impacted due to the virus.
THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The NASDA strategic plan represents inputs from a variety of stakeholders, and careful consideration was given to member input. Members offered direction via telephone interviews, a carefully selected strategic planning working group, and an electronic survey that went out to the entire membership. Specifically, the strategic planning process included:

1. INTERVIEWS WITH WORKING GROUP, INFLUENCERS AND SELECT PARTNERS
NASDA developed a strategic planning working group designed to represent the diversity of the NASDA membership and types of American agriculture. These men and women — along with trade association and elected official influencers, and select partners — were interviewed about opportunities and threats and to gather input on key elements of the plan, including the values, mission, vision and purpose of the organization to guide us forward.

2. ELECTRONIC SURVEY OF NASDA MEMBERSHIP AND STAFF
NASDA sought to have all of its members’ voices heard. For that reason, an electronic survey was developed and distributed to the entire membership and state staff. NASDA staff also received a similar survey.

3. STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING WITH WORKING GROUP
Input from the above two steps was used at the planning meeting to provide direction on plan development. Working together, the group laid out a draft plan, including values, mission, vision, purpose and key areas of focus for NASDA.

4. STAFF MEETINGS AND SMALL GROUP SESSIONS
Following the meeting, an all-staff session was held in which they were briefed on the outcomes from the above steps. Using direction from the working group, staff then held smaller group sessions to finalize actions and SMART objectives for each priority. Staff involvement is an important step in this process, as the internal team will drive implementation of the plan.

5. PLAN FINALIZED AND APPROVED BY NASDA WORKING GROUP AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS
The plan was then fine-tuned and presented back to the working group and board for final approval.

While these five steps represent key elements of strategic plan development, strategic planning is never done. Rather, the plan should continually be referenced to ensure all NASDA activities seek to achieve the objectives of the plan. In addition, key plan elements — values, mission, purpose, vision — should remain intact for the duration of the plan (2020-2025) while actions may be updated annually.
Core Values
State departments of agriculture provide public services and NASDA is their nonpartisan, united voice. Together we believe in:
- Advocating for American agriculture, food systems and rural communities.
- Engaging in dialogue and collaborating with a diverse set of stakeholders.
- Making decisions informed by sound science.
- Earning trust by acting with integrity and transparency.

Mission
Grow and enhance American agriculture through policy, partnerships and public engagement.

Vision
Agriculture leads the way toward a healthy and resilient world.

Purpose
To nourish people and communities while serving as stewards of the environment and public trust.

Strategic Priorities
2. Enhancing member engagement and education: convening members for information sharing, peer networking and consensus building.
3. Growing partnerships: working with stakeholders on key agricultural issues.
4. Conducting and facilitating strategic public engagement: engaging key media influencers and empowering stakeholders with outreach tools to elevate the importance of American agriculture.
Government affairs: representing ag on Capitol Hill and with government entities.

Goals:
- Federal agencies and representatives on Capitol Hill turn to NASDA as a trusted source for information.
- NASDA is shaping policies affecting American agriculture.

Actions:
- Formalize, communicate, and implement the processes for policy priority development, including clearly outlining roles for the committees — which are fundamental in developing policy priorities — and identifying mechanisms for ongoing committee engagement with members serving as a resource for information and perspectives.
- Be the eyes, ears and voice of NASDA and its members on the Hill, including House and Senate Ag Committees, and with federal agencies such as USDA, FDA, EPA, USTR, etc. Monitor legislation and regulations, advocate on behalf of policy priorities and provide information to members in a timely manner. NASDA should also consider the following input from the strategic planning process:
  - Build and maintain a relationship database to ensure strong networks are in place with members of Congress, the administration and appropriate legislative and regulatory staff. Work with states to build off their knowledge of local delegates.
  - Develop relationships with groups, including but not limited to the Department of Transportation, Department of Homeland Security, Department of the Interior, Department of Energy, Centers for Disease Control, Office of Personnel Management, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, etc.
  - Enhance NASDA member visibility in D.C. via panels, Hill hearings, briefings, etc.
  - Enhance appropriations process to ensure funds are allocated to policy priority areas.

SMART Objectives:
In conjunction with this strategic priority, NASDA will:
- Engage with 500 influencers (members of Congress, the administration, representatives of federal agencies) annually, including 90% of new members on Capitol Hill.
- Positively impact 15 pieces of proposed or enacted legislation annually.
- Submit 50 letters and comments per year on ag policy priorities.
- Increase appropriations funding to the top three policy priorities established by the board annually.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

Member engagement and education: convening members for information sharing, peer networking and consensus building.

Goals:
• Members are engaged and find value in NASDA.

Actions:
• Evaluate all meetings — national and regional — for ways to provide added value, including fostering networking and information sharing among members, which were identified as primary interests of the membership. Implement a plan of action. The strategic planning process suggests that NASDA, working in conjunction with regional Presidents, should explore new approaches and implement a plan that considers:
  ○ Having collaborative, regional meetings where members can get together more frequently.
  ○ Organizing roundtable meetings around particular topics of interest, such as livestock, forestry, hemp, etc.
  ○ Hosting receptions for less formalized discussions.
  ○ Virtual approaches that provide value to members.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

- With input from the executive committee, reevaluate and revamp new member onboarding and mentorship program with an aim on increasing the understanding of NASDA, and long-term engagement with the organization.

- Foster greater connectivity between NASDA and its members by enhancing the member database and adding a member index whereby members can connect with one another and find subject-matter experts. Emphasis should be placed on adding staff from each state to the database, in order to build deeper relationships beyond single members; outreach can be conducted via one-on-one phone calls, events and more.

- Enhance member positioning and messaging strategy by clearly defining benefits of membership including networking, information sharing, meetings and resources, cooperative agreements and more; use this as basis for all communications as outlined below.

- Provide ongoing and consistent communication to members via multiple touchpoints on areas of interest, particularly on happenings at the federal government level related to policy priorities, other issue areas of importance and issues impacting particular states. NASDA should also consider the following input from the planning process:
  - Provide research and background, arming members with informational tools that are relevant, accurate, timely and useful.
  - Get in front of issues that matter with proactive communication to the membership.
  - Clearly communicate policy priorities and the process by which priorities are identified, and share successes where NASDA is making an impact.
  - Demonstrate value of cooperative agreements and other partnerships.
  - Present grant opportunities to the states as a value-added benefit of membership.

- Audit current communication vehicles that go from NASDA to its members with a focus on ensuring consistent communication about benefits of membership, demonstrating value and providing tiered ways to consume information, e.g. “quick reads” versus “in depth” analysis. Included in the analysis should be a review of the NASDA website and its navigation, social media strategy and annual reports.

SMART Objectives:
In conjunction with this strategic priority, NASDA will:

- Obtain an average 35% open rate and 8% click-through rate for member communications, including NASDA News and Member Update annually.

- Maintain at least 90% of members who indicate they would refer a colleague to a NASDA event, as determined by post-event surveys.

- Grow member satisfaction as determined by a 2020 baseline survey. After survey is complete, NASDA will determine a specific metric for increasing satisfaction.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

Growing partnerships: working with partners – nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic entities, private sector companies, federal or state agencies or universities – on key agricultural issues.

Goals:
- Grow partnerships that aid in supporting NASDA’s vision and policy priorities and provide member value.

Actions:

Cooperative Agreements:
- Grow current and new cooperative agreements with federal partners that support continued or new funding and provide added value to membership. Engage members in those agreements whenever possible, and communicate value of those partners to members, as identified in Strategic Priority #2.

Other Partners:
- Working in conjunction with the executive committee, identify goals for new partners and identify focus areas for new partner development; consider partners that can provide monetary and other value. Potential niche areas to consider include ag-tech, logistics, food, conservation, and university partners. Pursue partners in alignment with direction set by executive committee.
- Evaluate resources used to seek and engage partners. As part of this effort, NASDA should:
  - Review benefits of partnership for all partner types, including federal and private partners to ensure optimal value is achieved on both ends.
  - Evaluate ways to communicate partnerships; consider the role of digital resources, such as the NASDA website, social media support and webinars.
  - Develop a partner agreement, clearly outlining the ways in which NASDA engages partners, specifying NASDA policy priorities remain independent of and without influence from partners.
  - Review and refine welcome package outlining how partners can make the most out of their partnership with NASDA.
  - Develop an annual plan for connecting partners and members, when doing so provides value for all. Connections may include stakeholder roundtable meetings, sponsored breakfast receptions at NASDA meetings and more.
- Collaborate with the NASDA Foundation in identifying partners that best fit the foundation mission.

SMART Objectives:
In conjunction with this strategic priority, NASDA will:
- Secure $800,000 in funding annually from new and existing national partners, representing a $200,000 annual increase from FY20.
- Align and collaborate with at least one partner each from two sectors with shared policy priorities during 2020. Evaluate this objective and re-set annually as needed.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4

Conducting and facilitating strategic public engagement: engaging key media influencers and empowering stakeholders with outreach tools to elevate the importance of American agriculture.

Goals:

- Increase understanding of and support for American agriculture.
- Increase awareness of NASDA.

Actions:

- Develop a NASDA brand positioning and messaging strategy to serve as the foundation for subsequent communication. This positioning strategy should build off values that resonate across audiences, highlight areas where state departments of agriculture demonstrate a significant role and showcase the benefits of American agriculture.

- Create public outreach “tool kits” to be distributed to members and partners, thereby leveraging their outreach capabilities. Tool kits should include the above-mentioned positioning and messaging strategy, and suggested outreach materials, including fact sheets, sample pitch letters and sample social media posts to be executed by the states and partners. Offer media training to those who are interested in how to best activate the toolkit.

- Develop an ongoing news bureau of activities, pursuing proactive, earned media coverage in credible, mainstream media with emphasis on op-ed development and serving as a resource for information on key issues affecting American agriculture. The news bureau of activities should:
  - Leverage NASDA members and staff experts.
  - Be kick-started with a media tour, introducing NASDA to top journalists nationwide.

- Use NASDA’s social media presence to communicate the NASDA brand positioning and messaging strategy. As part of this effort, determine which platforms are of highest priority, based on target audiences. Develop a targeted social media strategy and editorial calendar designed to seek engagement, using multimedia and other tools.

- Evaluate the NASDA Next Generation program and consider other programs focused on the next generation as means to facilitate agricultural policy education, enhance future leaders in public service for agriculture and provide member value.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4

SMART Objectives:
In conjunction with this strategic priority, NASDA will:

- Establish relationships with six top tier media outlets in 2020, and secure four (targeting one per quarter) opinion pieces attributable to NASDA in top tier media annually.

- Increase the number of followers across all social media platforms by 30% in 2020, while also tracking engagement rate to determine a SMART objective for subsequent years of this plan.

- Grow the number of members who find NASDA-created resources valuable in helping them communicate with the public, as determined by a 2020 baseline survey (survey to be completed as part of strategic priority #2).