



Infrastructure and Membership Assessment Report

May 2015

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INTRODUCTION

History

The North Dakota Urban and Community Forestry Association (NDUCFA) was established as a North Dakota nonprofit corporation in March 1985 by city foresters, primarily in response to the need to institutionalize urban forestry in response to Dutch Elm disease. The membership association received its 501(c)(3) tax exempt status from the IRS in August 2010.

NDUCFA operated as a volunteer-run association from its inception until January 2015. In 2014, the association issued a request for proposals (RFP) for a part-time executive director, which was made possible through a one-year America the Beautiful Grant (ATB) from the North Dakota Forest Service. After an interview process, Clearwater Communications, an association management and public relations firm based in Bismarck, was selected by the NDUCFA Executive Committee to provide executive director services. A one-year contract was signed in January 2015.

Report Development Process

For the first six months of its contract, Clearwater Communications was tasked with the following:

1. Surveying the association infrastructure, including how committees are set up, tasks are delegated, and officer positions are filled;
2. Surveying the membership and evaluating membership dues to support association sustainability and strengthen membership; and
3. Facilitating strategic planning and developing an annual work plan.

To undertake tasks one and two, Clearwater utilized the following strategies:

- Evaluation of NDUCFA's existing documents, including but not limited to the strategic plan, bylaws, minutes, financial reports, dues history, website, and membership materials.
- Review of purposes and materials of related associations, such as the South Dakota Arborists Association and the Midwestern Chapter of the International Society of Arborists.
- Interviews of key NDUCFA stakeholders.
- Distribution and analysis of an online membership survey.

This infrastructure and membership assessment report summarizes the findings.

Next Steps

On June 2, 2015, NDUCFA will hold a strategic planning session in Jamestown with key stakeholders. Using this report and the existing strategic plan, Clearwater Communications will facilitate the discussion among stakeholders. Based on the planning session, Clearwater will work with the NDUCFA Executive Committee to draft a 2015-2017 strategic plan, as well as work plans and budgets for the remainder of 2015 and for 2016. These documents will be presented to the membership for final approval at a NDUCFA member meeting July 28, 2015, in Absaraka, North Dakota.

ASSOCIATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Governance Overview

Nonprofit governance is the establishment and implementation of policies and procedures by the elected board of directors to provide leadership and accountability while advancing the mission of the organization. Nonprofit associations operate under a variety of governance structures; under North Dakota state law, nonprofits must have a president and a secretary.

The following NDUCEFA mission and objectives are outlined in the organization's 2005 constitution:

Mission

North Dakota Urban and Community Forestry Association is an independent, non-profit North Dakota Corporation, dedicated to the advancement of the science and profession of urban and community forestry in North Dakota.

Objectives

- Maintain and promote high ethical standards among members in the practice of arboriculture.
- Stimulate public interest in tree planting, preservation and maintenance.
- Promote public education to develop greater awareness for the value of arboricultural practices.
- Encourage sound legislation, policies and programs conducive to urban forestry.

A 2011 document identifies the NDUCEFA mission as follows: to educate private citizens and promote the importance of proper tree care management to tree care professionals.

As listed on the website, NDUCEFA's goal is to increase awareness of the importance of trees and to enhance the professionalism of the tree industry in North Dakota.

Board of Directors

According to the NDUCEFA constitution, the association is governed by a board of directors comprised of five officers (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and newsletter editor) and the past president. Officers are elected by the membership at the winter meeting held at the end of each calendar year.

In practice, NDUCEFA is guided by four officers (president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer) known as the executive committee.

Committees

The only identified committee in the constitution is the nominating committee. Special task committees may be appointed by the president as needed.

According to the NDUCEFA website, committees include conference, species rating, and budget.

Committees/appointed positions proposed in the existing strategic plan include executive, audit, budget, conference, liaison to NDCFC, promotional, species rating, and webpage manager.

Conflict of Interest Policy

According to the NDUCEFA constitution, directors, officers, and committee members must sign a compliance policy annually.

ASSOCIATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Membership Overview

According to the NDUCEFA constitution, there are three categories of membership:

- Regular: government employee engaged in urban/community forestry or interested North Dakota resident
- Affiliate: individual or firm who manufactures or supplies products for arboriculture or non-resident
- Student: enrolled in arboriculture, urban forestry, horticulture, forestry, landscape architecture or related fields

Dues

According to the NDUCEFA constitution, dues cover one calendar year and must be paid by March 31. Dues must be approved by membership and are currently \$25 for all categories. In practice, dues are collected with conference registration; membership renewals/invoices are not sent to those who do not attend the conference.

Membership Numbers & Revenue Summary

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Dues	\$ 25	\$ 25	\$ 25	\$ 25	\$ 25
Members	48	55	48	58	60
Revenue	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,375	\$ 1,207	\$1,455	\$1,500

Dues of Comparable State Associations

	Regular	Affiliate	Student
Nebraska Arborists Association	\$ 65	\$ 60	\$ 30
Wisconsin Arborist Association	\$ 45	\$ 75	\$ 15
Minnesota Society of Arboriculture	\$ 40	\$ 50	Free
South Dakota Arborists Association	\$ 35	\$ 50	\$ 5
Iowa Arborists Association	\$ 25	\$ 15	\$ 5
Kansas Arborists Association	\$ 20		
ND Nursery & Greenhouse Association	\$ 50	\$ 25	

Benefits

Education and networking opportunities are benefits listed on the NDUCEFA website, along with the opportunity to guide urban and community forestry in North Dakota.

Code of Ethics

Members must agree to abide by the NDUCEFA code of ethics as follows:

1. To further the science and practice of professional arboriculture by subscribing to and maintaining high ethical standards among the members.
2. To stimulate great public interest on the planting and preservation of shade and ornamental trees.
3. To encourage the practice of urban forestry in the state of North Dakota.
4. To promote public education to develop greater appreciation for the value of arboricultural practices.
5. To encourage legislation and all fields allied to urban forestry to adopt policies conducive to urban forestry goals.

ASSOCIATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Financial Overview

Actual NDUCEFA revenue and expenses for 2011-2014 are provided, along with the approved 2015 budget. The last three completed fiscal years have provided operating surpluses, which has helped build the association's reserves. Most nonprofits strive to maintain three to six months of operating expenses in reserve, which NDUCEFA has achieved.

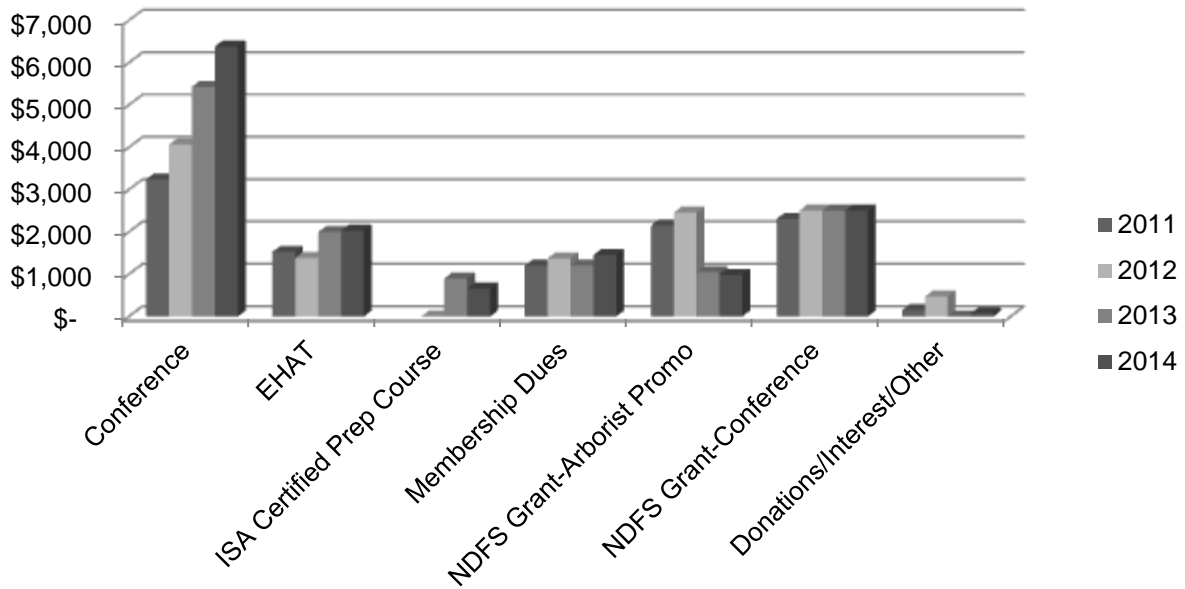
		Actual				Budgeted
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Income						
10-11	Annual Conference	\$ 3,240.00	\$ 4,064.95	\$ 5,429.09	\$ 6,383.30	\$ 6,500.00
10-12	Electrical Hazard Awareness Program	\$ 1,525.00	\$ 1,385.00	\$ 1,995.13	\$ 2,028.57	\$ 2,200.00
10-13	ISA Certified Exam Prep Workshops		\$ -	\$ 900.00	\$ 659.95	\$ 660.00
10-14	Membership Dues	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,375.00	\$ 1,207.27	\$ 1,455.20	\$ 1,500.00
10-15	MOU Certified Arborist Promotion	\$ 2,149.00	\$ 2,454.90	\$ 1,049.18	\$ 984.72	\$ -
10-16	ND Forest Service Grant (conference)	\$ 2,307.99	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$30,000.00
10-17	Donations / Grants / Interest / Other	\$ 147.80	\$ 471.05	\$ 1.64	\$ 76.32	\$ 75.00
	Total Income	\$10,569.79	\$12,250.90	\$13,082.31	\$14,088.06	\$40,935.00
Expense						
20-21	Annual Conference	\$ 5,790.68	\$ 6,948.90	\$ 7,998.78	\$ 7,020.33	\$10,000.00
20-22	Electrical Hazard Awareness Program	\$ 296.93	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,079.02	\$ 1,200.00
20-23	ISA Certified Exam Prep Workshops	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 636.06	\$ 387.14	\$ 1,750.00
20-24	Postage and Related Materials	\$ 44.00	\$ 96.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 188.17	\$ 250.00
20-25	Certified Arborist Promotion	\$ 1,642.21	\$ 1,036.19	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
20-26	General Supplies	\$ 14.60	\$ -	\$ 32.08	\$ -	\$ 250.00
20-27	Scholarships	\$ -	\$ 1,999.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500.00
20-28	Web Site Maintenance	\$ 1,057.03	\$ 12.99	\$ 10.00	\$ 300.00	\$ 750.00
20-29	Accountant, Legal Fees, 501(c)(3)	\$ 1,001.83	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10.00	\$ 10.00
20-30	Insurance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 661.38	\$ 712.25	\$ 750.00
20-31	Miscellaneous / Other	\$ 423.99	\$ 10.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50.00
20-32	Contract Services	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$20,040.00
20-33	Printing	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 250.00
20-34	Telephone	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 150.00
20-35	In-state Travel	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 500.00
20-36	Out-of-state Travel (MFI)	\$ 1,399.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00
	Total Expense	\$11,670.27	\$10,103.08	\$ 9,438.30	\$ 9,696.91	\$38,450.00
	Surplus (Deficit)	\$ (1,100.48)	\$ 2,147.82	\$ 3,644.01	\$ 4,391.15	\$ 2,485.00
	Ending Checking Account Balance	unknown	\$10,143.72	\$13,647.65	\$18,038.95	\$20,523.95

ASSOCIATION INFRASTRUCTURE

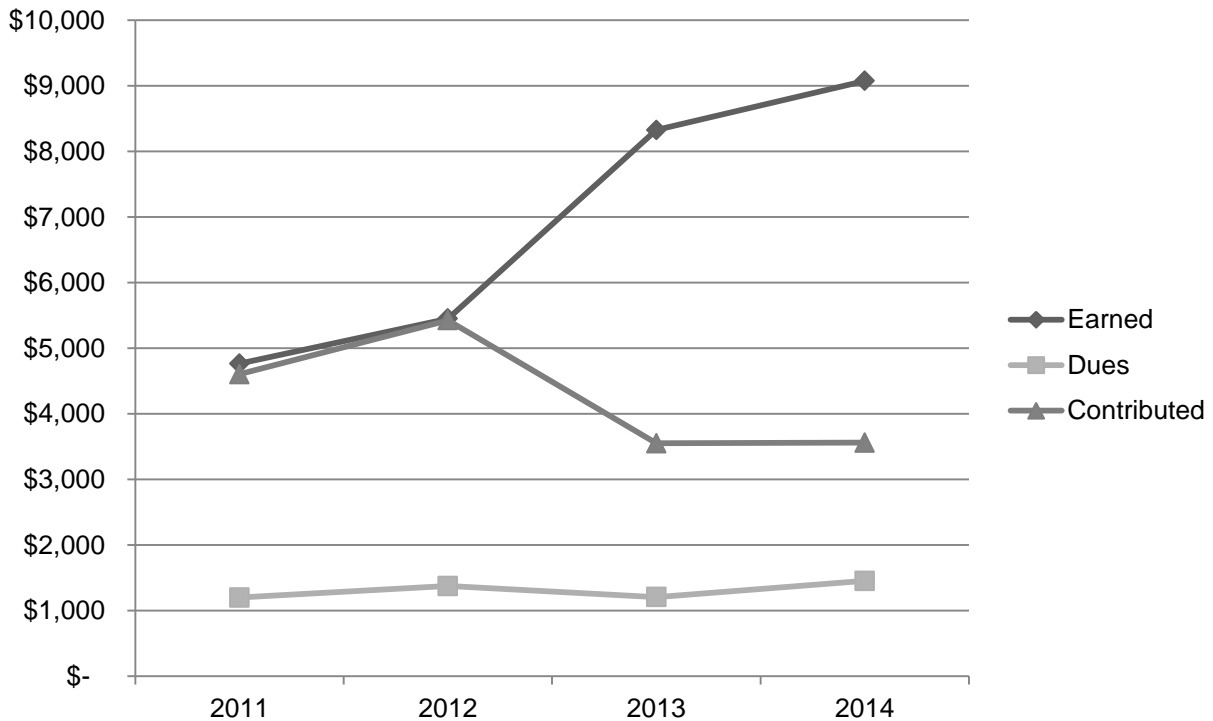
Revenue Review

Until 2015, NDUCFA’s work was supported primarily by earned income from the annual conference and workshops (registration fees), secondarily by contributed income (North Dakota Forest Service grants), and finally by membership dues. An executive director was hired in 2015 with a significant one-year grant from the North Dakota Forest Service.

Revenue Categories 2011-2014



Revenue Streams 2011-2014



ASSOCIATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Earned Income Review

Prior to 2015, the annual conference has been NDUCEFA's single largest source of revenue. However, without the annual North Dakota Forest Service grant to supplement the conference registration fees for income, the association would have run deficits for the conference four of the last five years.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Income					
Annual Conference	\$3,240.00	\$ 4,064.95	\$ 5,429.09	\$6,383.30	\$ 7,559.94
ND Forest Service Grant	\$2,307.99	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$ 2,564.20
Expense					
Annual Conference	\$5,790.68	\$ 6,948.90	\$ 7,998.78	\$7,020.33	\$ 6,535.21
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ (242.69)	\$ (383.95)	\$ (69.69)	\$1,862.97	\$ 3,588.93

Income					
Electrical Hazard Awareness Training	\$1,525.00	\$ 1,385.00	\$ 1,995.13	\$2,028.57	\$ 2,205.00
ND Forest Service Grant					\$ 1,047.30
Expense					
Electrical Hazard Awareness Training	\$ 296.93	\$ -	\$ -	\$1,079.02	\$ 1,047.30
Surplus (Deficit)	\$1,228.07	\$ 1,385.00	\$ 1,995.13	\$ 949.55	\$ 2,205.00

Income					
ISA Certified Exam Prep Workshops	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 900.00	\$ 659.95	\$ 400.00
Expense					
ISA Certified Exam Prep Workshops	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 636.06	\$ 387.14	\$ 281.01
Surplus (Deficit)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 263.94	\$ 272.81	\$ 118.99

NDUCFA has partnered with the North Dakota Nursery and Greenhouse Association (NDNGA) for at least 10 years to host a joint conference in Fargo. Although there is no formal written agreement, currently NDNGA solicits and manages sponsors and exhibitors. NDNGA retains all sponsor and exhibitor fees; NDUCEFA members are able to visit the exhibit hall and participate in breaks. Speaker fees and expenses are covered by the association securing them, and each association handles registration independently. The only NDUCEFA conference revenue is from registration fees. For many other associations, sponsors and exhibitors provide a significant source of revenue that supports other association activities during the year. For NDUCEFA to generate additional conference revenue, it may be necessary to ask NDNGA if they would be willing to implement a joint sponsor-exhibitor effort between the two associations.

Conference Registration Fees

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Early	\$ 35	\$ 35	\$ 50	\$ 50	\$ 75
Standard	\$ 45	\$ 45	\$ 60	\$ 60	\$ 85
Student	\$ 25	\$ 25	\$ 25	\$ 25	\$ -
EHAT	\$ 25	\$ 25	\$ 30	\$ 30	\$ 35

Conference Attendance & Membership

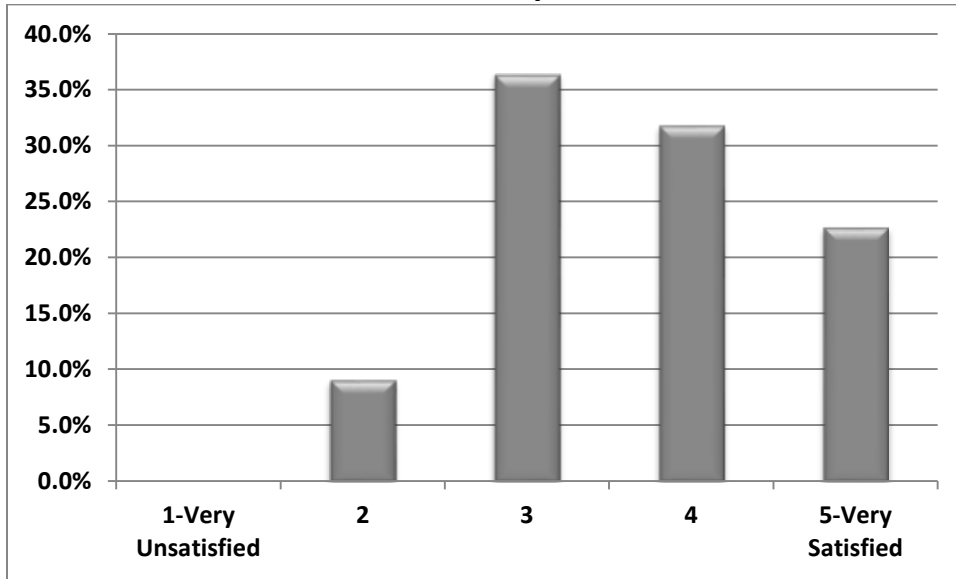
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Attendees (full conference)	unknown	120	122	113	105
Members	48	55	48	58	60
Percent Joining NDUCEFA		46%	39%	51%	57%

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

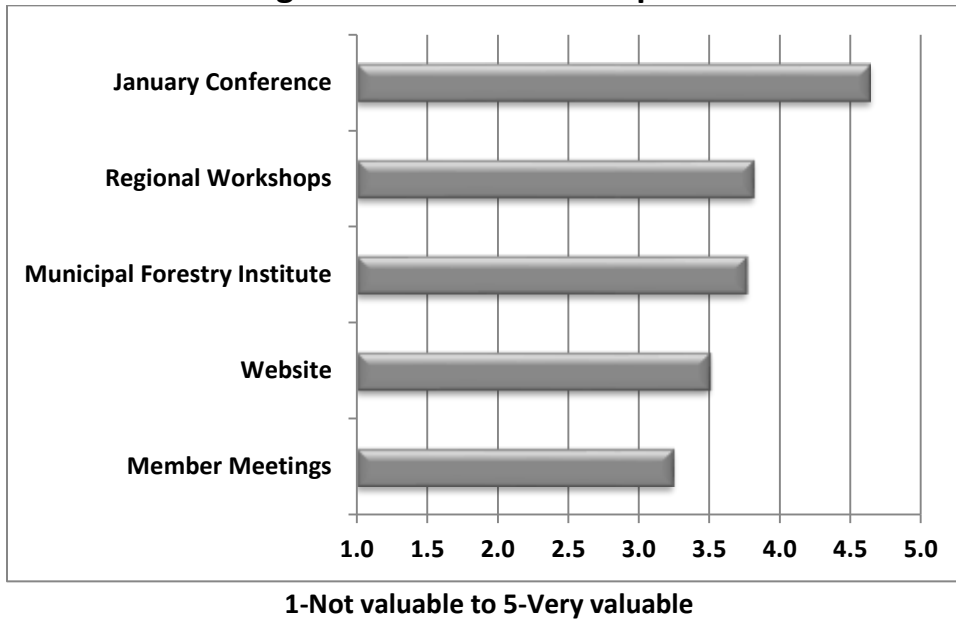
Process

NDUCFA distributed an online membership survey link to 54 member emails in April 2015. The survey achieved a response rate of 41 percent (22 individuals) by the May 1 deadline. The results are summarized below.

Overall Membership Satisfaction



Average Value of Membership Benefits



MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Why Are You a Member?

Professional Development/Education & Networking

1. Professional organization, training, continuing education, networking, etc.
2. To get training and information on advances in urban and community forestry; for the camaraderie, and to have a voice in urban and community forestry in ND
3. To gain further knowledge of trees and their maintenance and protection practices in the urban landscape
4. Urban forester, continuing education opportunities, networking
5. ND has a pretty small community of forestry professionals; NDUCEFA is the best vehicle to connect and network with peers; I also like the educational aspect of the annual workshop
6. To keep in touch with the leaders in the industry in ND
7. Networking opportunities
8. To be more informed with current issues and to network with fellow arborists
9. To have a networking and contact base to ask questions related to trees/planting/etc.

It's My Job

1. Because I am a tree-related professional in ND and NDUCEFA is one of the few forest/tree-related groups in the state
2. I work for an organization closely tied to NDUCEFA; it's unthinkable that I would NOT be a member
3. Because I love my job and trees
4. Work
5. Our organization offers us a membership paid by them
6. My boss signs me up
7. Comes with employment

Greatest Strengths of Association

Conference/Education

1. Conference
2. The January conference is definitely the best
3. The conference
4. NDUCEFA hosts an excellent annual conference
5. Annual workshop
6. Coordinating annual workshop in January/February
7. The annual meeting is an important opportunity to strengthen professional relationships; good for networking
8. Arborist training

Leadership/Commitment

1. Passionate professionals
2. There has been some very strong leadership and effective members in the past
3. Several dedicated individuals attempting to move association forward
4. The current leadership of its executive committee
5. The long term members of the organization
6. Leadership is very knowledgeable and approachable, willing to help fellow professionals
7. Knowledgeable members
8. Diversity across the state
9. It's a great source to connect all those interested in forestry in ND

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Opportunities for Improvement

Communication/Marketing

1. Communication, newsletter
2. Communications; a newsletter might be nice
3. A newsletter would be great
4. Communication; member meetings have not been announced to many of the members
5. Marketing
6. Getting the word out (server list); I never see meeting agendas or minutes

Professional Development/Education

1. Training, etc.
2. More regional workshops, demonstrations, hands-on learning opportunities; members want to learn, NOT sit at a meeting for two hours; without the beer and food, I don't believe anyone would attend the annual meeting
3. Annual workshop – need new ideas and move out of Fargo (maybe rotate around state); identity is lost with the nursery group
4. Variety of topics at the yearly meeting; seems like often the same presenters are there presenting similar topics from year to year
5. More forestry related topics and vendors at our January conference

Organizational Vision/Structure/Sustainability

1. Cohesive vision and consensus on the role and function of the organization
2. Develop plan for leadership development within the organization
3. Organization on procedures – if someone wants to put on a workshop who needs to be contacted, what paperwork needs to be completed
4. Functional membership meetings
5. Now that we're a 501(c)3 we should look at fund raising

Membership

1. Building membership
2. Engaging the membership
3. Encourage and involve new individuals
4. Gaining membership; determining a benefit to even have NDUCEFA

Major Community Forestry Challenges

Most Significant Challenge

Tree Care Practices

1. Incorrect planting practices shortening tree life
2. Keeping up with insects and diseases
3. Invasive species
4. Pruning
5. Lack of species diversity in communities

Workforce

1. Limited forestry staff
2. Maintaining current staff
3. Filling positions

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Public Awareness

1. Lack of knowledge by citizens
2. Getting people excited about trees; aside from the urge to plant in spring

Other

1. Growth/infrastructure changes
2. Changing reactive culture

Second Challenge

Tree Care Practices

1. Relaying proper tree care selection and practices to people who proclaim to be experts – but are doing things improperly; very challenging to deal with this issue
2. Tree inventory
3. Disease management
4. Heavy ash tree population
5. Improper tree care

Resources

1. Funding
2. Funding/support
3. Having money to fill positions
4. Appropriate funding of our budget

Engagement

1. Encouraging communities to develop sustainable forestry programs
2. Finding the right group to partner with
3. New involvement – low

Third Challenge

Tree Care Practices

1. Tree maintenance
2. City "Forester" training
3. Determining the individualized needs of communities
4. Overall tree maintenance
5. Always seems to be the department to have to allow less stringent variances when other departments won't consider a variance due to site conditions

Resources

1. Funding
2. Time
3. Time and resource shortage

Workforce

1. Lack of professionals to provide arboricultural services to communities
2. Finding a good reliable and experienced workforce

Engagement

1. Lack of interest

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Key Stakeholders

With the assistance of the NUCFA Executive Committee, 14 key stakeholders were identified for Clearwater Communications to interview in order to learn more detailed information about the history and operations of the association. The interviews were conducted in person or by phone from February to May 2015.

Sharon	Bartels	ND Forest Service	Lisbon
Wayne	Beyer	Wahpeton Park Board	Wahpeton
Jackson	Bird	City of Bismarck (former)	Bismarck
Tom	Claeys	ND Forest Service	Bismarck
Sam	DeMarais	Fargo Park District	Fargo
Michael	Fugazzi	Grand Forks Park District	Grand Forks
Scott	Gagne	Minot Park District	Minot
Rebecca	Haag	ND League of Cities	Bismarck
Jerry	Henke	City of Bismarck	Bismarck
Bruce	Johnson	City of Williston	Williston
Scott	Liudahl	City of Fargo	Fargo
Gerri	Makay	ND Forest Service	Bismarck
Joel	Nichols	ND Forest Service	Bismarck
Joe	Zeleznik	NDSU Extension	Fargo

The results of these interviews are summarized below by Clearwater Communications.

Association Purpose

Three general themes emerged in response to asking stakeholders to describe, in their own words, the purpose of NUCFA.

1. Professional development/education/information to promote arboriculture and professional tree care
2. Promotion of and advocacy for the importance of trees and urban forests
3. Networking opportunities within the urban forestry profession and tree industry

Accomplishments

Any accomplishment identified by more than one stakeholder is listed below with the first being identified most frequently.

1. Offering the annual conference and other regional workshops
2. Supporting member attendance at the Municipal Forestry Institute
3. Developing a strategic plan
4. Partnering with the North Dakota Forest Service
5. Securing 501(c)(3) tax exempt status
6. Hiring an executive director

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Areas for Improvement

Five broad areas where stakeholders saw opportunity to strengthen the association arose during the interviews.

1. Membership recruitment and engagement, including identifying benefits and improving meetings
2. Professional development and education, including expanding topics and locations as well as reviewing timing of workshops
3. Communication, including using technology, exchanging information, marketing benefits, and maintaining consistency
4. Advocacy and education of decision-makers and the public, including promoting tree benefits and supporting the North Dakota Forest Service and NDSU Extension
5. Organizational structure and leadership, including setting realistic goals and encouraging engagement

Target Audiences

Based on the existing NDUCEFA strategic plan, Clearwater identified three target audiences for the association's efforts, which were prioritized by stakeholders as follows.

1. Arborists, forestry staff and tree care professionals
2. Decision-makers (city commissioners, mayors, engineers, planners, legislators, etc.)
3. General public

Role of Executive Director

Serving as the coordinator/organizer for the association was most often identified as the role of the executive director, particularly in the areas of financials, scheduling, membership, and communication. Several stakeholders suggested the executive director should assist with conference planning and logistics. A few others identified prioritization of goals and planning as important.

It was also acknowledged by several stakeholders that active engagement of association leaders and members, even with an executive director, is essential to grow the association and achieve its mission and goals.

Urban/Community Forestry Challenges

Six general themes arose from discussions with stakeholders regarding challenges facing urban/community forestry in the state.

1. Inadequate engagement with decision-makers and the public about the importance of trees and green infrastructure
2. Disease and the lack of diversity
3. Workforce shortages and fewer volunteers
4. Rapid growth, particularly in the west
5. Limited funding/budgets
6. Lack of small town engagement

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Partners

Three primary association partners emerged from the discussion with stakeholders: North Dakota Forest Service, NDSU Extension Service and North Dakota League of Cities. A number of limited or potential partners were also identified:

- International Society of Arborists
- North Dakota Horticulture Society
- North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund
- North Dakota Recreation and Park Association
- North Central Turf Grass Association
- South Dakota
- News media
- Utility companies
- Landscapers

NATIONAL URBAN FORESTRY CHALLENGES

National Trends

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Research Station released a report entitled “Sustaining America’s Urban Trees and Forests: a Forests on the Edge Report.” The stated purpose of the report is “to provide an overview of the current status and benefits of America’s urban forests, compare differences in urban forest canopy cover among regions, and discuss challenges facing urban forests and their implications for urban forest management.”

Urban Forest Challenges

- Insects and disease
- Wildfire
- Natural catastrophic events
- Invasive plants
- Additional development
- Air pollution
- Climate change
- Other changes over time

Management Challenges

- Inconsistent management approaches
- Lack of funding
- Weak linkages with other resource management programs
- Inadequate planning