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MIFFS Background

Founded in 1998, Michigan Integrated Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS) is a statewide membership driven organization (501c3) whose purpose is to establish and develop more sustainable, profitable agriculture systems. MIFFS has been effective at nurturing successful partnerships that have created more profitable, environmentally friendly agricultural systems in Michigan. The organization’s existence is based on the premise that agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan’s rural communities.

MIFFS supports a framework called “community-based models”. These models incorporate new agricultural development and evolving technologies into rural communities. They also work toward building leadership capacity within rural communities as well as work to identify and address barriers (institutional, economic, social, cultural) to the creation of successful food and farming systems. Lastly, the models provide an avenue for sharing new agricultural ideas and experiences on a statewide basis.

The organization has become a recognized leader and resource to Michigan’s agricultural community due to its ability to establish and develop partnerships among individuals and organizations. The outcomes of these partnerships have yielded more productive, profitable and environmentally friendly rural communities. MIFFS has also made it a priority to stay current on the latest agricultural learnings and has continually incorporated these learnings into its’ work as well as communicated the new information to appropriate audiences.

MIFFS has focused its structure around four program areas; growing market opportunities (new business for farmers), multicultural farmers (assisting limited resource farmers), local food connections (linking communities to regional farms), agricultural stewardship and sustainable production (on-farm research and processing).

Fund support for the MIFFS organization and its work comes from several private donors and foundations as well as state and national governmental grants.

MIFFS Vision (pending approval)

• MIFFS is a recognized leader and resource for Michigan’s agricultural community in the movement to establish and develop more sustainable, productive agricultural systems for the state. We nurture successful partnerships resulting in more profitable, environmentally friendly agriculture systems. Our existence is based
on the premise that agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan’s rural communities.

**MIFFS Purpose** (pending approval)

- We nurture successful partnerships; resulting in more profitable, environmentally friendly, agricultural and rural communities.

**MIFFS Principles** (pending approval)

**Leadership** – As leaders in Michigan’s agricultural community, we understand the development of truly sustainable food systems requires the implementation of market forces, public policy and education.

**Resource** – We provide networks, resources and learning opportunities for Michigan’s agricultural community resulting in more profitable, productive, sustained agriculture systems.

**Partnerships** – Nurturing partnerships at the local, regional and national levels, including those that bridge across traditional boundaries and disciplines, are essential to fundamental and long-term positive change for agricultural productivity and profitability.

**MIFFS Marketing & Communications Objectives:**

- Develop and deliver a communications plan during 2005, effectively targeting key audiences; small and medium size farmers, funders and institutional decision makers, to accomplish the following:
  - Position MIFFS as an accomplished, successful leader in Michigan agricultural and food business community.
  - Differentiate MIFFS role vs. other Michigan agricultural organizations as the nucleus of the agricultural community and the first stop for Michigan agricultural and food business in need of assistance and resources.
  - Implement a communications plan that will nurture (build, develop and maintain) a long term relationship with key audiences in order to develop trust and gain credibility of the MIFFS organization leading to audiences’ active participation (quantify) with MIFFS and active support (quantify) of community based food systems.

**MIFFS Marketing & Communications Strategies**

- Develop a “brand” look and tagline for MIFFS that will position the organization as an accomplished leader and trusted, credible resource and friend in the Michigan agricultural and food business community.

- Implement consistent messaging and look across all vehicles that will embody the MIFFS brand character - a trusted helpful authority and friend with timely newsworthy, educational information to share - and ensure messaging is easy for the reader (audience) to identify piece as a communication from the MIFFS organization.

- Ensure consistent communications (wording in body of communications) incorporating key messages to targeted audiences to provide them with timely news and information of interest about MIFFS that will encourage active participation with MIFFS organization and community based food systems.

- Deliver key messages to target audiences utilizing most cost-effective vehicles and timing appropriate to specific audience to reach them to encourage desired audience response to develop the relationship with MIFFS:
  - Phone call and email inquiries to MIFFS organization
- MIFFS website access and review
- Increased MIFFS membership and conference attendance
- Funder support – consistent funding
- Institutional decision maker support

- Ensure MIFFS recognition through marketing communications initiatives for contributions to partners, alliances and start-up organizations that benefit Michigan agricultural and food businesses as well as sustainable agriculture initiatives.

**MIFFS Marketing & Communications Tactics:**

**Audience:** Farmers

**Key Messages – Objectives and Tone:**

- MIFFS is an accomplished, trusted leader in the Michigan agricultural and food business community, and has newsworthy, timely and educational information to share.
- Straightforward, clear information communicated in friendly, simple language that is easy and quick to read and digest providing them the opportunity to visit detailed information via website and newsletters.
- **Overarching messaging** – MIFFS is the nucleus of Michigan agricultural and food business community and is the connection for small, medium size and multicultural farmers to the resources they can use to successfully build their farm business.

**Vehicles:**

Utilize vehicles within marketing communications plans to build and nurture long-term relationship with farmers. Periodic communications timed at key intervals most appropriate to farmers for greatest opportunity to generate anticipated response and most important assist them in their needs for building sustainable food systems.

**Key Vehicles:**

- Newsletter - Positioning and Implementation.
- Publicity Materials - Development, Build Relationship Network and Establish Key Timing and Contact Points.
- Events - Prioritization, Positioning and Implementation.
- Membership Data Base - Maintenance and Tracking for Relationship Marketing Development.
- Customer Inquiries - Management and Tracking for Relationship Marketing Development.
- Direct Mailings – Positioning, Prioritize Timing and Implementation.

**MIFFS Marketing & Communications Tactics:**

**Audience:** Funders and Institutional Decision-Makers

**Key Messages – Objectives and Tone:**

- MIFFS is an accomplished, trusted leader in the Michigan agricultural and food business community and has been successful at increasing audience participation and active support of community based food systems leading to increased economic opportunity for Michigan's agricultural and food businesses.
- MIFFS is proven at utilizing funding to accomplish funder’s goals and the organization’s mission in a fiscally sound, measurable manner which leads to enhanced audience participation in agricultural and community based food systems in the state of Michigan.
- **Overarching messaging** – MIFFS sets goals and delivers results for enhanced, improved community based food systems producing a positive economic impact for the state of Michigan.

**Key Vehicles:**

- Newsletter - Positioning and Manage Implementation.
- Web Site - Strategy Development, Positioning and Manage Implementation.
- Publicity Materials - Development, Build Relationship Network and Establish Key Timing and Contact Points.
- Events - Prioritization, Positioning and Implementation.
- Membership Data Base - Maintenance and Tracking for Relationship Marketing Development.
- Customer Inquiries - Management and Tracking for Relationship Marketing Development.
- Direct Mailings – Positioning, Prioritize Timing and Implementation.

**MIFFS – 2005 Marketing Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECT MAILINGS</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Q1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Mailing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Building Mailing</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| NEWSLETTER                           |     | X   | X   |     | X   |

| WEBSITE                              |     |     |     |     | X   |
| Launch                               |     |     |     |     | X   |

| EVENTS                               |     |     |     |     |     |
| Annual Conference                    | X   |     |     |     |     |
| Natl presence / 2 -3 events          |     | X   | X   | X   | X   |
| State presence / 2 -3 events         |     |     |     | X   | X   |

**MIFFS - Marketing Communications Budget**

**2005 Preliminary Budget** $ -----

Marketing Design
- New Look & Tagline $ ----

Printed Materials
- Press Materials $ ----
- Alternative Markets $ ----
  - Growing Market Opportunities
  - Multicultural Farmers
  - Local Food Connections
  - Agricultural Stewardship and Sustainable Production
• Fund Development Materials $ ----

Total Print $ ----

Website Development & Maintenance
• Website Development $ ----
  • Maintenance $ ----

  Total Website $ ----

Events $ ----

Data Base Maintenance $ ----

Marketing Communications Evaluation

Communications Evaluation Framework
• Evaluation Plan finalized – 05/31/05

Evaluate communications effectiveness

  • Institutional Decision Makers
    • Evaluate increased reliance on MIFFS as a leader and nucleus of Michigan agricultural community.
    • Evaluate increased partnering: attendance and sponsorships at MIFFS conferences, visible support of MIFFS programs.

  • Funders
    • Evaluate increased interest by funders in supporting MIFFS initiatives and an increased willingness to partner with MIFFS, ultimately resulting in increased, sustained funding levels to the organization.
    • Develop linkages between funding plan objectives, communications programming and evaluation.
      ie: Identify funders giving criteria and link to MIFFS organizational outcomes.

  • Farmers
    • Evaluate communications effectiveness for encouraging increased farmer participation with the MIFFS organization.
      • Track farmer referrals and follow-ups by farmers to referral sources.
        ie: Segment farmer audience; track number of calls, types of requests, geographic, demographic, size of farm.

Marketing Communications Next Steps

• Brand Identity
  • 1st round review – 04/15/05
  • Final – 05/16/05

• Determine Collateral by Audience
  • By 04/15/05
  • Printed materials to market – 07/15/05

• Begin website work
  • By 04/15/05
  • Web launch – 09/01/05