

Communications, Marketing and Membership Report to the NGFA Board of Directors March 2024

I. Communications

Email: In February 2024, NGFA began using MailChimp to send emails to NGFA members and external contacts with access to open and click rate data. Analytics data for the emails sent in January and February show an open rate of 42 percent and a click rate of 4.7 percent, which are both higher than the industry average for associations according to Higher Logic reports on email benchmarks.

Website: NGFA changed its website platform in January 2024. According to Google Analytics, the NGFA website had fewer users and views in the Oct 1, 2023-Feb. 29, 2024, period than the same period last year Oct. 1, 2022-Feb. 28, 2023. (16K users this year compared to 21K users last year). However, in the past 90 days (Dec. 1, 2023-Feb. 29, 2024), users have increased 490% compared to the previous 90 days due to convention registration and CAP applications.

Social Media: NGFA has three social media platforms: Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. In April 2023, NGFA began a subscription with Hootsuite, a social media monitoring tool. Available Hootsuite data suggest that between Oct. 1, 2023-Feb. 28, 2024 compared to the same period the previous year, page and profile reach and impressions grew among all social media platforms. Post reach decreased compared to the previous while post impressions grew, suggesting that the same users are viewing NGFA posts multiple times. Posts with the highest engagement rates include content related to the Grain and Feed Photo Contest and CEC sponsors on Facebook; the Eagle Pass rail crossing closure, NGFA annual convention registration and CAP applications on Twitter; and CEC speaker live photo updates and NAEGA's new CEO on LinkedIn.

Press: NGFA began a subscription to Critical Mention, a news monitoring service and journalist database, in June 2022. Between Oct. 1, 2023-Feb. 29, 2024, mentions of the NGFA in online and print publications peaked dramatically during the Texas rail crossing closures in December. A full analysis of NGFA coverage during this period in online publications, television and radio is available in this document.

Communications Survey: NGFA launched a project with Roots & Legacies in January 2024 to conduct an NGFA Communications Discovery and Analysis. The Communications, Marketing and Membership Committee will assess the results of an open-ended "Phase I" survey sent to a small group of NGFA leaders in February 2024. The committee will serve as the task force to help create and publicize a survey for all NGFA members to be completed by May 2024.

II. Marketing

Communications, Marketing and Membership (CMM) committee: The CMM committee met for the first time this year at convention, after being formed as part of the committee task force restructuring. The committee is chaired by Kelly Buchanan, Founder of Oak Valley Concepts, located in Covington, LA. NGFA staff members Rebecca Grubbs, Sarah Gonzalez and Amelia Fitzgerald are co-staff liaisons. The first committee meeting focused on the communications survey detailed in the communications section above.

CEC 2023: CEC 2023 was attended by 406 registered attendees, the largest number of attendees in at least 10 years. The strength of the program contributed to the increased attendee number, which helped mitigate the loss of revenue associated with a smaller trade show; the 2023 trade show featured 68 exhibitors, the smallest number in at least 10 years. Of the exhibitors who participated in 2022 but not 2023, 86% also dropped their NGFA membership in that timeframe. Despite this, improvements to the trade show layout yielded positive comments from the exhibitors in attendance and generated enthusiasm for next year. Ultimately the event netted \$219,693, approximately \$19k under budget.

CAP Class of '24-'25: NGFA in February welcomed 39 participants to the Committee Apprentice Program, the 11th group of CAPs to participate. The '24-'25 class officially began their CAP year here at convention and will conclude their year at next year's convention. In between they will attend the NGFA Summer Fly-In in Washington, DC in June and participate actively in their assigned committee's business.

128th Annual Convention: At the time of writing, convention was tracking to be on target financially, despite a reduction in attendance and sponsorships. The financials were helped by three factors: an increase in non-member attendees, an increase in Ag Village exhibitors and booth staff, and an increase in attendees registering after the early bird deadline. This last factor was also observed in the CEC 2023 registration pattern and reflects a trend that is being observed nation-wide. Final convention financials will be presented at the September board meeting in Colorado Springs, CO.

Upcoming Meetings & Events: Registration for the Trade Rules Seminar opened on March 5th. The Seminar this year will be held at the Hilton St. Louis Ballpark in St. Louis, MO on May 8 & 9.

NGFA's Summer Legislative Fly In will take place June 4 & 5 in Washington, DC. Information will be made available in early April.

CONVEY24 will be held July 24 – 26 in Omaha, NE at the Hilton Omaha. NGFA hosts CONVEY jointly with GEAPS and GEAPS Media. Registration will open late April.

Save the date for Harvest Safety Week 2024, to be held the week of August 19. During Harvest Safety Week NGFA each day sends timely harvest safety resources to its members and affiliates via email, webinar, social media, and other platforms.

Save the date for the 2024 September Board of Directors Meeting, to be held Monday September 9 at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, CO. More details will be made available in early summer.

III. **Membership Recruiting and Retention**

NGFA on March 4 welcomed Amelia Fitzgerald to the team; Amelia is the association's new Director of Marketing and Member Services. Amelia takes over primary membership duties from Todd Kemp, most recently NGFA's Executive Director of Membership, who retired Feb.1 after 32 years with NGFA.

Convention 2024 concludes the '23-'24 membership recruiting year. Since September '23, 22 new-member firms have joined the association. They are:

Active member:

1. Atlantic Trade & Grain
2. Dakota Access
3. Delta Diamond Ag LLC
4. Eagle Railcar
5. Guardian Energy Hankinson
6. Horizon Resources
7. Mozza Foods
8. North Dakota Soybean Processers
9. POET*
10. Scranton Equity Exchange
11. Stag Securities
12. Tyrosi LLC
13. Valero Grain Marketing LLC
14. Valero Marketing & Supply Co.

**POET consolidated their membership and added an additional entity, which updated their dues payment.*

Associate member:

1. Cadaro Inc.
2. Charm Sciences
3. FOSS North America
4. Oak Alley Concepts
5. One Degree Ag,
6. Soles Enterprises
7. SonicAire
8. Washington State Dept. of Ag

Transportation member:

1. Van-G Logistics

Membership has several goals for the '24-'25 membership year. New-member recruiting will continue to be focused on Active-type high-priority targets, with particular emphasis placed on the growing soyoil processing sector and on southeastern rail shippers/receivers who benefit from NGFA's representation on rail policy. Staff also plan to engage NGFA leadership in discussions about potential untapped sectors that could provide new recruiting opportunities.

Additionally, the membership team will take steps to strengthen connections with existing members who pay more than \$10k/year in dues and those who are not actively engaged with the association beyond writing their membership check. This will be accomplished through an association-wide membership marketing campaign and targeted communications with the companies in question.