



**Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan  
2014-2018**



**Strategic Plan 2014-2018**

*December 16, 2013*

**Table of Contents**

Executive Summary	p. 2
History	p. 3
Process Overview	p. 3
Guiding Ideas	p. 4
Strategic Plan	p. 6
Acknowledgements	p. 10



## Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan 2014-2018

### Executive Summary

Over the past four decades, the Fair Trade Federation has built a dynamic community of fair trade organizations that transform the way business is done. FTF's first strategic plan, which was adopted in 2008, crystallized the Federation's role as an association of fully committed members and laid a strong foundation for growth. As we look ahead towards the next five years, we seek to build on our strength in a way that reflects our values and has a deep impact on producer communities.

During the past five years, much of FTF's work has been internal – we've created and adopted a Code of Practice, and made important additions and revisions to reflect the needs of our membership. We've established a strong screening process that has made membership a trusted benchmark for those seeking fully fair trade organizations. And, we've grown our community to include 250 dedicated and passionate fair trade organizations, all of which support each other's work in tangible ways.

Now, we recognize that in order to fully realize our mission we must extend beyond our current activities and capacities. In this Strategic Plan, we have created three goals that push us to reach farther.

#### **Goal 1: Grow our Collaborative Community of Fully Committed Fair Trade Organizations**

Our Code of Practice sets a high bar for businesses by requiring that fair trade practices drive every aspect of their work. In order to uphold this high bar, we must preserve the depth and validity of our screening process and ensure that our Code of Practice speaks to a wide variety of fair trade businesses. We also must grow our community in a way that reflects the full diversity of dedicated fair trade organizations. We know, for example, that we need to build a stronger network in Canada; we also know that we need to include a greater number of retailers, cafes, and coffee roasters. In five years we wish to be a community of at least 400 members *who are all fully committed to fair trade*. This is an ambitious goal, but we know it is important to achieve it.

#### **Goal 2: Strengthen the Capacity of Fair Trade Member Organizations to Thrive**

One of the strengths of our community is the extent to which FTF members support each other. We want to increase the ways that this happens, through opportunities for peer mentoring, better online information sharing tools, and a dynamic annual conference. We also need to grow and cultivate the fair trade supply chain in North America – which includes finding ways to support and engage retailers who have made a deep commitment to fair trade. In this way, we can leverage all of our strength to create real change in producer communities.

#### **Goal 3: Promote and Differentiate Fully Committed Fair Trade in the Movement and Marketplace**

Our third goal is the one most influenced by the challenges we see in the fair trade movement today. There are an increasing number of fair trade claims in the marketplace, and not all of them reflect a deep commitment to fair trade principles. It is essential that we as a community differentiate the work that we do, and explain it in a clear and compelling way.

Within the movement, this means educating others about the fully committed model – our principles as well as the practices behind them. It also means engaging with our partners and allies both



## **Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan 2014-2018**

domestically and globally, so that we're all working together. And, we need to find accessible tools - words, images, and avenues of communication - that compel others to support our work.

### **Looking Ahead**

What is most exciting to me about this strategic plan is that it is built upon the work of decades, yet looks forward to a stronger future. In all of our work, we aim to support and grow a community of vibrant fair trade organizations whose work has deep and lasting impact on producer communities.

### **History**

The Fair Trade Federation (FTF) traces its roots to the late 1970s when alternative trading organizations began holding yearly conferences. In 1994, the group incorporated formally as the North American Alternative Trade Organization; and, the following year changed its name to the Fair Trade Federation. Between 2000 and 2006, the Federation contracted Coop America to handle its administrative and programmatic functions until, in October 2006, FTF had the capacity to hire a fulltime staff member to reestablish independent operations. Today, the Federation has three full time staff members and a membership of 250 fully committed fair trade organizations.

### **Process Overview**

The first step in this strategic planning process was to spend time reflecting upon the Guiding Ideas that form the basis of the Fair Trade Federation's work. In October 2012, during their meeting in Sonoma, CA, the Board of Directors reaffirmed FTF's Mission, Vision, and Values. These Guiding Ideas were then used as the framework for the planning process.

In February of 2013, the Federation engaged Ora Grodsky of Just Works Consulting, who had also lent her expertise to the Federation's first strategic plan. The Board of Directors appointed a Strategic Planning Committee, which was charged with gathering member and stakeholder input in order to propose strategic goals, strategies and objectives. .

In March of 2013, the Federation surveyed members electronically to ask what the Federation should strive for within our next five years. In May of 2013, at the Federation's annual member meeting in Raleigh, NC, members further discussed these ideas and provided detailed input about FTF's strategic priorities. This input was essential in helping the Strategic Planning Committee craft initial goals and strategies, which were then affirmed by the Board of Directors in June.

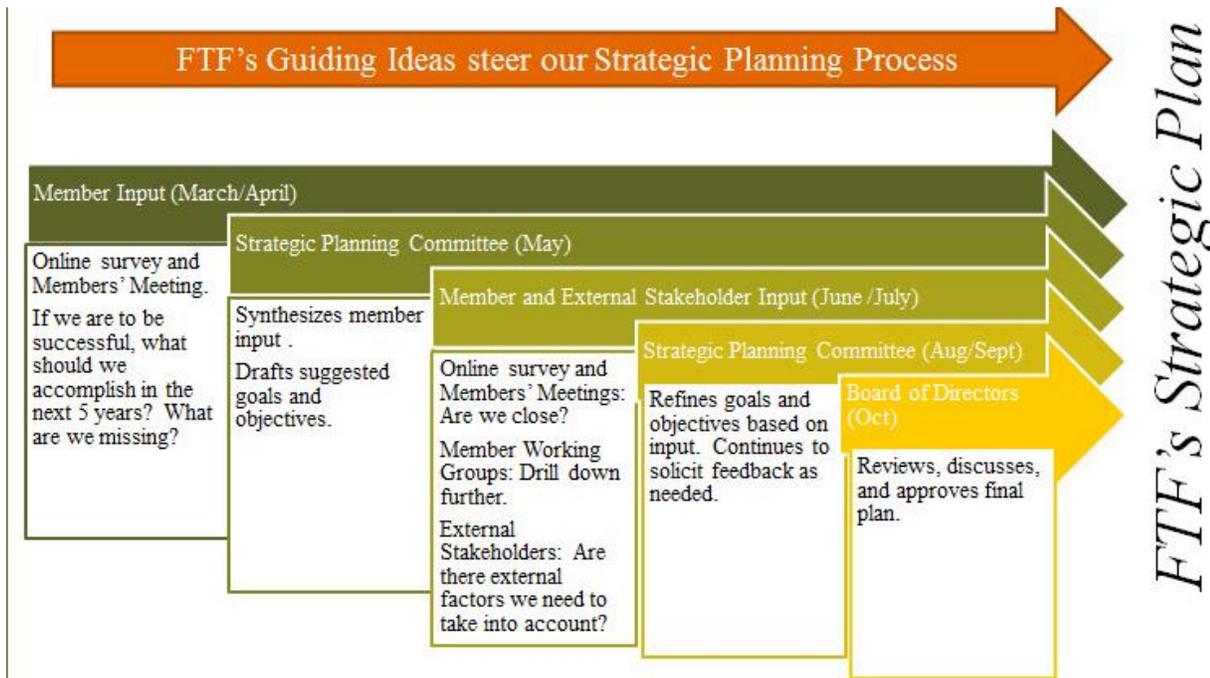
In late June of 2013, the Strategic Planning Committee surveyed members electronically for a second time. This time, the committee asked members to help prioritize the chosen strategies and identify objectives for success. During the summer and early fall, the committee enlisted the help of a small working group of members to specifically discuss goal 3, "Promote and Differentiate Fully Committed Fair Trade in the Movement and Marketplace." During this same time period, the committee and FTF staff engaged with a wide array of stakeholders within the fair trade movement to get input on the plan. The Strategic Planning committee also coordinated with the Retailer Review Committee; the collaboration of these two committees proved helpful in ensuring coordination of the Federation's work.



## Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan 2014-2018

In October 2013, the Board of Directors met for a two day retreat in New Salem, MA. During this time they approved and adopted the Strategic Plan.

The graphic below summarizes the Federation’s process in crafting this Plan.



### Guiding Ideas

#### **Mission**

The Fair Trade Federation is a trade association that strengthens and promotes North American organizations fully committed to fair trade. The Federation is part of the global fair trade movement, building equitable and sustainable trading partnerships and creating opportunities to alleviate poverty.

#### **Vision**

The Fair Trade Federation envisions a just and sustainable global economic system in which purchasing and production choices are made with concern for the well-being of people and the environment, creating a world where all people have viable economic options to meet their own needs. We seek to alleviate poverty by continually and significantly expanding the practice of trade that values the labor and dignity of all people.



## **Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan 2014-2018**

### **Values**

The Federation holds the following as its organizational values:

#### **Trade as a Force for Positive Change**

We value trading relationships that distribute power, risks and rewards more equitably. We believe that trade should be used as a tool to help alleviate poverty, reduce inequality and create opportunities for people to help themselves. Trade should promote fair compensation, safe and healthy conditions, direct and long term relationships, transparent business practices, and workplaces free from discrimination and forced child labor. When trade encompasses these practices, the lives of all people and their communities improve.

#### **Respectful Partnerships**

We celebrate the contribution and value of all people in the supply chain and recognize the dignity of each person and organization in our interactions and relationships. We believe that people have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives based on open sharing of information.

#### **Community**

We value communities grounded in trust, moral support, cooperation, and a sense of belonging, making us stronger individually and as a whole. We value the global fair trade movement, recognizing that we are intrinsically interdependent, and believe that our unified voices convey a powerful message.

#### **Sustainable Practices**

We value continuous improvement and application of economic, social, cultural, and environmentally sustainable practices. We embrace the United Nations' definition of sustainability "to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

#### **Fullest Commitment**

We believe that credibility comes from demonstrating, through open and transparent interactions, the promises we make. We have a responsibility to maintain the highest standards and expectations of ourselves; and, we value organizations that aspire to fully embrace fair trade principles.

#### **Consumer Knowledge**

We value the impact that comes from empowering consumers with knowledge. We believe that when people understand that trade can be a force for positive change they will use their purchasing power to improve the lives of people and communities.



**Strategic Plan**

**Goal 1: Grow our Collaborative Community of Fully Committed Fair Trade Organizations**

<b>Strategies (Primary ways we will work to achieve our goals)</b>	<b>Objectives (Results that we want to achieve within the 5 year plan)</b>
<p><b>1.1</b> Ensure the validity and integrity of our members’ commitment to fair trade</p>	<p><b>1.1.1</b> The member screening and rescreening process ensures full faithfulness to FTF’s values.</p> <p><b>1.1.2</b> Members understand the depth of the screening process, the reasons behind it, and are committed to carrying it forward.</p> <p><b>1.1.3</b> A rigorous rescreening process is developed and implemented, with all members being rescreened periodically. .</p> <p><b>1.1.4</b> Membership requirements for all business types are fully developed, defined, and approved, with a particular focus on cafés and retailers</p>
<p><b>1.2</b> Grow membership through a widespread recruitment campaign that builds community among fully committed fair traders</p>	<p><b>1.2.1</b> There exists a clear value proposition, including tangible benefits, for all members - especially those that are currently underserved.</p> <p><b>1.2.2</b> The Federation and benefits of FTF membership are well known among fair traders throughout North America, and especially Canada.</p> <p><b>1.2.3</b> Applicants who are not approved but have high potential are provided with support towards meeting membership criteria and a “fast track” rescreen opportunity</p> <p><b>1.2.4</b> The Federation’s membership will have grown significantly. The Federation will be a community of at least 400 member organizations with a budget of at least \$500,000.</p>



**Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan  
2014-2018**

**Goal 2: Strengthen the Capacity of Fair Trade Member Organizations to Thrive**

<b>Strategies (Primary ways we will work to achieve our goals)</b>	<b>Objectives (Results that we want to achieve within the 5 year plan)</b>
<p><b>2.1</b> Facilitate methods for members to share information, ideas, benchmarking, and best practices.</p>	<p><b>2.1.1</b> An online communication and resource hub for connecting members is widely utilized, with content that is cataloged and accessible.</p> <p><b>2.1.2</b> Our annual national conference has the most relevant content to help our members grow. Information that is generated at the conference is disseminated widely to members and others as an ongoing resource for information and learning.</p> <p><b>2.1.3</b> Peer group mentoring program is fully developed and broadly utilized by members as a means of growing their businesses and creating community.</p> <p><b>2.1.4</b> Meaningful benchmarking data is collected among a wide pool of members and shared regularly so that they can measure their own progress in key areas.</p> <p><b>2.1.5</b> Members have a clear way to connect with others in their region.</p>
<p><b>2.2</b> Enable business to business connections, particularly between members, that support fair trade sales at all points in the North American supply chain</p>	<p><b>2.2.1</b> There exists a viable supply chain of fully committed FTF members in North America. This includes double the number of cafés and retailers, plus a diverse array of wholesalers of both handmade and commodity products.</p> <p><b>2.2.2</b> Cafe and retail members readily access information about wholesale members, including data, stories, and marketing materials.</p>



**Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan  
2014-2018**

**Goal 3: Promote and Differentiate Fully Committed Fair Trade in the Movement and Marketplace**

<b>Strategies (Primary ways we will work to achieve our goals)</b>	<b>Objectives (Results that we want to achieve within the 5 year plan)</b>
<p><b>3.1</b> Provide education about fully committed fair trade within the movement and to fair trade allies</p>	<p><b>3.1.1</b> The definition of fully committed fair trade is distinct and well understood within the fair trade movement</p> <p><b>3.1.2</b> FTF is a clearinghouse for materials about fully committed fair trade, to be utilized by those who wish to have a deeper understanding of the model.</p> <p><b>3.1.3</b> FTF regularly creates original online and print articles about fully committed fair trade, particularly weighing in on current events and ideas in the marketplace.</p>
<p><b>3.2</b> Promote member organizations by developing and promoting FTF brand identity</p>	<p><b>3.2.1</b> FTF has a compelling marketing vocabulary to talk about the fully committed model, with simple, clear messaging for ethical consumers and retail buyers.</p> <p><b>3.2.2</b> When buying FTF members products, consumers and retail buyers see a powerful message that compels them to support fully committed fair trade businesses.</p> <p><b>3.2.3</b> Media outlets that cater to the ethical consumer come to FTF as a regular source of information about a responsible way of doing business.</p> <p><b>3.2.4</b> FTF is the “go to” source for ethical and conscientious consumers looking to purchase from fully committed businesses.</p> <p><b>3.2.5</b> FTF is the “go to” source for retail buyers wishing to include fully committed fair trade in their product lines.</p>



**Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan  
2014-2018**

<b>Strategies (Primary ways we will work to achieve our goals)</b>	<b>Objectives (Results that we want to achieve within the 5 year plan)</b>
<p><b>3.3</b> Compile tools and information that enable members to assess their work with producer communities.</p>	<p><b>3.3.1</b> Members use FTF’s tools to effectively evaluate the impact of their work on producer communities.</p> <p><b>3.3.2</b> Impact data from members is published and publicly available, increasing integrity and transparency of FTF and FTF members</p> <p><b>3.3.3</b> A common screen for wholesale vendors is accepted and utilized by FTF member retailers.</p> <p><b>3.3.4</b> Information about wholesalers’ work with producers is (voluntarily) available to member retailers in a centralized online location.</p>
<p><b>3.4</b> Engage with the broader fair trade movement on a North American and global level. Be recognized as a major player in the movement, representing a high bar of fair trade.</p>	<p><b>3.4.1</b> FTF has established strategic relationships with other aligned fair trade groups, guided by an internal filter that determines our level of involvement.</p> <p><b>3.4.2</b> FTF members are knowledgeable about the movement and about FTF’s involvement with fair trade globally.</p> <p><b>3.4.3</b> A clear strategic policy for defining and engaging with domestic fair trade is developed and implemented.</p> <p><b>3.4.4</b> FTF understands fully the implications of other validation systems and, as appropriate, develops partnerships for cross recognition/ promotion.</p> <p><b>3.4.5</b> FTF has a clear and proactive strategy regarding craft certifications on the market.</p>



**Fair Trade Federation 5 Year Strategic Plan  
2014-2018**

**Acknowledgements**

The Federation would like to thank the following individuals who contributed their time and insights:

*Strategic Planning Committee members*, Kristin Johnson, Jennie Misner, and Serena Sato;

*Fair Trade Federation Board members who served during this plan's creation*, Paul Culler, Carrie Hawthorne, Teresa Hendricks, Kristin Johnson, Renice Jones, Megy Karydes, Jennie Misner, Serena Sato, Michael Skillicorn, Brian Smucker, Tom Yesberger, and Jacque Wong;

*Ora Grodsky* of Just Works Consulting, for her insightful guidance;

*Working Group members* Sam Carpenter, Aileen Hagert, Rodney North, Serena Sato, and Lee Wallace;

*Retailer Review Committee members* Paul Culler, Jill Dean, Cheryl Musch, and Kelly Weinberger;

Members of the Fair Trade Federation, and our colleagues within and outside the fair trade movement.