Strategic Plan
2022–2024
A Roadmap for the Advancement of the Association
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AmericanHort is a leading national/international industry trade association serving 18,000 individual members in 1,600 companies and encouraging industry performance and growth.

With offices in Columbus, OH and Washington, D.C. we help steward an industry with economic dimensions that include:

$348B
INDUSTRY SECTOR

2.32M
JOBS

GENERATING
$42B
IN FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL TAX REVENUES

WE ARE A VISIBLE LEADER AND INFLUENTIAL VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
Our members include growers, retailers, landscapers, manufacturers, distributors, suppliers, sales representatives, researchers, and consultants among others.

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We provide leadership of the premier industry research and development foundation, Horticultural Research Institute, established to direct, fund, promote, and communicate research and programs that advance the health, economic, and environmental benefits of plants and landscaping in society. We’ve recently grown the foundation to $20MM.

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AmericanHort is known for our industry advocacy leadership. Our D.C. based advocacy and lobbying team manages issues, regulation, trade policy, and legislation that impact our industry and member businesses. We lead a state-based coalition that coordinates advocacy activities with 32 state programs to advance advocacy coordination at the state and local levels. We host an industry legislative summit in D.C. often featuring cabinet-level speakers, elected officials with ties to key industry issues and influential industry experts demonstrating the relationship we have built in Congress and the Administration. Labor, environmental regulation, research and small business issues are key focus areas.

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AmericanHort is a leading industry voice and we have expanded our capabilities to include impactful education and development events, workshops, and webinars as well as strong print, digital, and web communications capabilities to help inform and develop our members and improve our industry.

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We have recently hosted member events on grower innovation and best practices, advocacy, new technology applications, workforce development, developing the industry’s next generation leaders, and industry economic trends.

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Part of our mission is to help consumers and communities advance the health, economic, and environmental benefits of plants and landscape environments. Through investments in communities, research, next generation, future leaders, and other programs we sponsor, our industry’s success is dependent on getting people to develop outdoor and indoor environments for their health, health of the communities, and health of our industry.
Thank you for your continued support of AmericanHort and our efforts to help our members and the industry perform better, grow faster, and prepare for the future. I look forward to working with each of you in the years ahead to find new ways to strengthen your business and ensure the long-term success of our industry.”

—Ken Fisher
President & CEO,
AmericanHort

Current State of the Industry
(December 2022)

Abundant economic headwinds create significant risk for the economy and our industry in the next year.

The Federal Reserve will work to tame inflation creating an economic slowdown in the months ahead. But strong consumer spending, low unemployment, improving supply chains, and decent housing starts may mitigate big problems for our industry until after next summer. There’s hope that a recession would be relatively short lived, and the Fed would signal rate tapering by the end of next year—boosting the economy.
Recession – The U.S. is forecast to enter a recession in the coming 12 months as the Fed battles to bring down persistently high inflation, the economy contracts and employers cut jobs in response.

The Fed and Interest Rates – High inflation is proving to be more persistent than anticipated and has created a strong case for the Federal Reserve to lift and then hold interest rates at levels that will slow economic activity. The Fed will likely need to keep rates at restrictive levels until they are confident that inflation is firmly on the path toward their 2% goal.

Inflation – U.S. consumer inflation excluding energy and food costs accelerated to a new four-decade high in September reaching 6.6%, a sign that strong and broad price pressures are persisting. Inflation eased a bit in October to the slowest pace since January but remained high. The Labor Department reported that the consumer price index increased 7.7% in October from the same month a year ago, down from 8.2% in September.

Consumer Spending – Continues to be strong and that is a good sign for our industry. In August, consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of U.S. economic activity, increased 0.4% after falling 0.2% in July. And although consumer savings rates have fallen, there is still considerable excess consumer savings from the past 18 months providing a stabilizer for consumer spending.

Production Costs and Supply Chains – Inflation is at the core of our supply chain cost issues. Energy costs drive heating, fertilizer, transportation, and plastic costs among others. Labor is obviously a key production input across our industry and significantly affects trucking and many other supply-chain services. A slowing economy might help labor on the margins, but our growing dependence on seasonal visa workers will keep labor costs relatively high.

Our industry has done an excellent job attracting new customers to our products and services over the past two years, helping a new group of consumers enjoy the health, economic, and environmental benefits of our industry outputs. However, we need to acknowledge the headwinds facing both consumer spending and housing in the next 18 months. First the consumer spending shift to travel and entertainment coming out of the pandemic and now inflation, economic slowdown, and the risk of rising unemployment. Interest rates will create headwinds for housing and remodeling.

Business owners should “stress-test” their balance sheet and income statement and be prepared to pivot from a focus on growth to a focus on profit. If a hard recession hits, it often becomes “survival of the quickest” to manage costs and cash. Advice for all business owners given the economic environment is to keep a close eye on managing cash flows, preserve liquidity, tighten inventory levels as appropriate, work to expand gross margins, and be careful with growing selling, general and administrative (SG&A) expenses.

AmericanHort will continue to be an industry leader and partner to proactively identify and capture opportunities to improve the financial, operational, and organizational health of our industry.
CULTURAL VALUES

For Our Team and Our Members

Team Orientation

A culture built on individual integrity, trust, and respect that fosters open communication where diverse perspectives are embraced and differences are dealt with constructively, with sensitivity, and in a way that builds mutual confidence and teamwork.

Principled Performance

Demonstrate the sense of urgency, discipline, accountability, ownership, judgment, initiative, critical thinking skills, and risk-taking mentality necessary to generate the greatest contribution to the Association. Embrace change and drive continuous improvement.

Customer Focus

Understand and develop relationships with customers/members to anticipate and satisfy their needs in a way that creates real, long-term value for the Association, employees, and our members.

Potential & Fulfillment

Personal and professional growth are important for all AmericanHort employees and members and supported by an environment that encourages you to produce results that allow you to realize your full potential and find fulfillment in your work.
To advance our **Vision:**

Lead and unify the horticulture industry to cultivate successful businesses and help enhance lives through the benefits of plants.

And accomplish our **Mission:**

Unite, promote, and advance our industry through advocacy, collaboration, connectivity, education, market development, and research.

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**GOAL 1**

Be the leading organization supporting the industry’s financial, operational, and organizational health.

**GOAL 2**

Develop our Advocacy capability to defend and enhance our industry.

**GOAL 3**

Be the most effective employee development partner for the industry.

**GOAL 4**

Leverage the impact of Horticultural Research Institute investments in research and scholarship benefiting our industry.

**GOAL 5**

Explore, develop, and invest in new methods and innovations to expand Industry Communication, Collaboration, and Development.
Be the leading organization supporting the industry’s financial, operational, and organizational health.

**OBJECTIVES**

Ensuring the development of a healthy industry requires anticipating future industry needs and developing, in response, innovative and comprehensive programming to ensure shared prosperity and improved performance for each of our members. We must embrace our unique role in shared stewardship for the success of our predominately privately held, relatively fragmented industry structure through investments and communications across our audiences. Part of our success will be determined by how we effectively catalyze business, government, and our communities to embrace future programs. Our strategies will detail how this strategic plan will leverage our expertise and partnerships to integrate research, practice, human factors, and technology.

**TACTICS**

- Continue to Build the Cultivate Platform to facilitate commerce, employee development, research, and the industry professional network
- Develop and provide programming to help our member companies *Perform Better, Grow Faster, and Prepare for the Future*
- Focus, develop, and communicate best industry practices
- Help develop the necessary industry structure to ensure industry revenue growth, profit margins, and cash flow
  - Monitor and support consumer spending on horticulture
  - Programming to develop strong business acumen and leadership across member companies
  - Increase technology adoption to reduce costs and improve productivity

**INTENDED OUTCOMES**

- Continued—and improved—performance of member companies and the industry
- Increased effectiveness of AmericanHort programming
- Increased member engagement, networking, and participation
- Membership growth
Develop our Advocacy capability to defend and enhance our industry.

OBJECTIVES

We are fortunate to have a leadership position on a range of key industry advocacy issues thanks to the expertise, relationships, and coalitions our team has developed and effectively manage. The opportunity exists to develop expanded capabilities, additional key relationships in D.C., our participation and effectiveness at the state level, and member services. Advocacy, Government and Regulatory Affairs is a traditional “strong hold” for leading, national trade associations and we exercise significant advocacy leverage for our industry. There is a growing list of risks and opportunities that we can manage and positively impact for the benefit of our members and the industry.

TACTICS

- Manage/influence legislation and regulation impacting our industry
- Facilitate industry collaboration for advocacy and research
- Expand issues we manage and the effectiveness of government relations
  - Financial/Tax/Accounting legislation and regulations. (Cash accounting, interest expensing, accelerated depreciation, estate tax, crop insurance, “199A” qualified business income deduction)
  - Workforce availability, immigration, cost, and government oversight
  - Employment: healthcare, leave, unemployment regulations
  - DOL/OSHA rules, workplace regulations
  - Environmental legislation and regulations, climate change, water—supply and quality
  - Plant Health/Import-Export, Phytosanitary Regulations
  - Farm Bill, Research: specialty crop block grants, Floriculture and Nursery Research Initiative (FNRI), crop protection tools
  - Transportation and Infrastructure
  - Key Congressional Relationships/ Grassroots/Political Action
  - Lighthouse/State Partner Coalition and Issues Management
  - Plant Intellectual Property Rights
  - Industry Alliances: AIPH, IPPS, NALP, AWC
  - PlantPac

INTENDED OUTCOMES

- Protect the industry from harmful legislation and regulation
- Develop issue and policy positions to increase effectiveness of our policy/advisory and improve our industry operating environment
- Build stronger government relationships and more effective coalitions
- Enhanced reputation as the advocacy voice for the industry
Be the most effective employee development partner for the industry.

OBJECTIVES

AmericanHort efforts in the realm of employee/workforce development are some of the most exciting applications of the work we do. The results of our staff, industry subject matter experts, researchers, and consultants coming together in the expertise of our training programs deliver powerful, employable outcomes to those who experience them. Deploying in-person, digital, and virtual education, AmericanHort programming is teaching the skills needed to help our individual and business members to capture market opportunities and Perform Better, Grow Faster, and Prepare for the Future.

TACTICS

• Programs to connect, educate, lead, and inspire our members
  • Cultivate Education programming
  • Fall events
  • Leadership Academy
  • Women in Horticulture
• Training to support members becoming more resilient, innovative, and productive
  • Virtual training
  • Certification programs
  • tHRlive Series

INTENDED OUTCOMES

• Improved and transferable industry skill sets and acumen
• A recognized employee development partner at all organizational levels
• Comprehensive training for career development and reduced industry turnover
Leverage the impact of Horticultural Research Institute investments in research and scholarship benefiting our industry.

OBJECTIVES

To increase the speed of innovation and progress in our industry, we are dedicated to serving as a leader for investment in applied research, scholarship, and technologies that can revolutionize our industry in a scalable way. Our approach will emphasize research that: 1) quantifies and validates the benefits of plants, 2) creates or adapts systems making practices and processes more efficient, 3) evaluates consumer behavior, preferences, and trends, 4) tackles ongoing and emergent industry challenges.

TACTICS

• Develop thought leadership and best practices
• Provide for research that drives innovation
• Invest in market tools
• Continue to raise funds to build the foundation
• Target critical industries challenges & opportunities
• Provide next generation leaders scholarship and leadership development

INTENDED OUTCOMES

• Expanded research that improves the industry
• Continued growth of the Foundation and research/scholarships funded
• Drive innovation that accelerates the industry health and success
Explore, develop, and invest in new methods and innovations to expand Industry Communication, Collaboration, and Development.

OBJECTIVES

In front of us is a “target rich environment.” Given the depth and breadth of our industry the opportunities are boundless. We must continue to explore where AmericanHort should provide leadership, which initiatives would have the biggest impact on the industry and which of those would we have the best chance of achieving success. An organization or industry can only grow as fast as it learns, which requires enhanced communication and collaboration. We are committed to using our human and financial resources to carefully explore which future opportunities can help accomplish these ends.

TACTICS

• Be a guiding force in the industry for enhanced communication and collaboration

• Carefully prioritize and select the “best” initiatives in which AmericanHort should invest. “Best” being:

  • Benefit to the Industry: If successful it will make a difference
  • Success: There is a reasonable chance we accomplish the desired goal
  • Resources: We can foster the necessary finances, talent, and time
  • Industry Support: Once we demonstrate “proof of concept,” members will engage/support
  • Interrelatedness: The portfolio of the projects will create mutual benefits

• Examples of opportunities

  • Sustainability
  • Carbon Credits
  • Benchmarking
  • Leadership Academy
  • Women in Horticulture
  • Consumer spending on horticulture
  • Non-fossil fuel technology applications
  • Hemp biomaterials
  • Internet sales/interstate tax
  • Plant Intellectual Property/Plant Breeding
  • Business/Industry Succession, Generational Transfer
“The AmericanHort board and staff remain committed to and will continue to work hard to help the industry be prepared for a future that’s brighter than ever. Several exciting new initiatives on the horizon that will help train and develop you and your workforce for whatever comes next.”

—Jon Reelhorn
Chairman of the Board, Belmont Nursery, CA