

The Liebe Group

Strategic Plan 2012-2017



Our Vision

Vibrance and Innovation for Rural Prosperity

Our Mission

To be a progressive group, working together to improve rural profitability, lifestyle and natural resources

Our Core Business

- Agricultural research, development, validation and implementation
- Provide information, education, skills and training opportunities to members and wider community
- Strengthen communication between growers and industry and whole community

Our Values

The following are a set of evolving philosophies and values that the group maintains for members and employees. By accepting these values it enables us to build trust in order to make effective and efficient decisions and reach our potential.

Member Driven

Primarily the Liebe Group is here for its members, it must be to their cause & benefit. R&D, technology and capacity building is local and relevant and prioritized by the membership.

Innovation and Progression

The Group is innovative and progressive and this is encouraged and valued. An ethos of constant review is adhered to ensure we are on track and achieving best practice.

Inclusivity

The group is inclusive which means we involve, encourage and support staff, members and the community to take part, have a voice and maintain their ideas and views as individuals.

Apolitical

The group is apolitical, which means collectively we won't represent the members without following a process to ensure we are representing all their ideas or opinions.

Empowerment

Empowerment and capacity building is encouraged of members and staff to ensure everyone reaches their potential and supports their career directions.

Independence

The Group is Independent and acts from direction from the 'grass roots.' The Group is objective in its views and stance.

Professionalism

The Group is Professional which is encouraged and nurtured in the membership. The Group is driven by the decision making capacity of the management and their supporting sub committees which use accountable and transparent processes. We expect staff to be confidential in their dealings with in the group.

Working Together

Effective networking and links to beneficial partnerships is encouraged to add value and opportunities for the group. The Group works collaboratively within the agricultural industry to value add. The group maintains an ethos of team work and cooperativeness.

Respect

The Group always values and respects their members and their resources and experience. We expect people to be open and honest, and build process' that reflect transparency of the administration and processes used in the group.

Fun

There is a social and fun philosophy within the group.

Introduction

The 2012-2017 strategic plan was developed in September 2011 with the assistance of Nigel McGuckian from RM consulting group and builds on the existing strategic plan. Strategic Planning has always been a focus for the Liebe Group since the groups inception in 1997 and has become part of the groups progression and success over the years. This is the fourth strategic planning exercise the group has conducted.

During this process members were asked to describe the current external agricultural environment they are working in and what it may look like in 10 years time.

They described the future as having the following characteristics:

- Faster and more diverse modes of communication
- Real-time accessibility to anything, anywhere
- Food is highly valued and as a result, quality and accountability pressures are high
- Rapid technology advancement in crops, soils and input efficiencies leading to significant productivity gains
- Declining and more diverse rural populations
- Information is readily available and comes in many different forms and from many different sources
- Time pressures continue to increase

Members were then asked to and define what role a farmer group may play in the future.

They described a group having the following characteristics:

- Strong networks at a lot of different levels - locally, nationally and internationally.
- Impartial and independent information is highly valued in times of 'information overload'
- Increased capability to capture, filter, catalogue and provide more targeted information
- Ability to validate new technologies on-farm in a variety of different ways
- Face-face interaction is valued more than ever and the group has good systems to support this

The members acknowledged that the future and the environment we are currently operating in is continually changing and the role of the Liebe group needs to continually change and adapt in order to stay relevant. During this time, there will be opportunities for the group to capitalise on and threats to manage.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Capturing and fostering the group philosophy & energy to engage more people with similar interests
- Increase the use of new and varied tools for communication and extension.
- New systems to utilise and access knowledge from anywhere in the world instantly
- Increase problem solving capacity – highly skilled staff and contractors
- New methods of validating information and technology on-farm that is quicker and impartial
- Strong processes to capture, catalogue, filter and extend information
- Encouragement of new growth in rural towns through development of value adding projects
- Develop methods to support and stimulate innovative thinking and new ideas
- Creation of a more positive and attractive image of agriculture
- Continual engagement and support of young people in agriculture

THREATS

- Creation of a large gap between generations and those who don't relate to technology
- Lack of new ideas and innovation
- Loss of group vibrance through distance, population decline and burnout
- Farmers becoming distracted from their core business and what they do well
- Loss of capacity to operate at a continually growing level
- Vision is too far ahead of the membership which risks losing member involvement
- Declining profitability of farms
- Decline in agricultural students coming through the system leading to a skills drought
- Increasing call on resources increasing the risk of being too thinly spread to be effective
- Uneven distribution of technology through membership ie variable mobile signal coverage
- Loss of representation of members in the industry

Strategy Area 1

High Priority Research and Development, supported by targeted extension and improved validation methods

Rationale

Conducting high priority research and development is important to foster growth in the agricultural sector. R&D improves the capacity of people to make effective decisions, and when supported by targeted extension activities and validation methods, growers will have an increased capacity to make effective adoption decisions.

Liebe Group members will have access to the latest research and development activities conducted in Liebe Group area. R&D activities will be targeted towards issues identified by the members and prioritised by Liebe Group management. The prioritisation will be supported by a research and development advisory committee. The group will assist growers with implementation through conducting appropriate extension activities and methods to improve on-farm validation.

2012-2017 Targets

- 100% of Liebe Group members have made an effective adoption decision concerning the adoption of new technology assist by the Liebe Group.
- 10% increase of attendees under the age of 25 at major events
- A quality rating of 80% or greater by attendees of major events

Activities

Attract and develop partnerships with agribusiness and research organisations

- Include key industry personnel on the Liebe Group mailing list
- Maintain close relationship with Department of Agriculture and Food, Universities, CSIRO & other agribusiness.
- Keep abreast of GRDC research priorities and maintain close relationships Western Panel and grower group contact (Stuart Kearns)
- Develop and maintain partnerships with other industry and research bodies when opportunities arise
- Distribute Liebe R&D priorities and trial site details to major research organisations and agribusiness

Develop trials and demonstration to address local priorities at the Main Trial Site, Long Term Research Site, satellite sites and on farm

- Determine research and development priorities from annual member survey and R&D planning meeting.
- Develop trial program for the satellite sites in conjunction with DAFWA and agribusiness
- Organise and conduct on-farm demonstrations
- Discuss strategic R&D priorities at general meetings
- Ensure we seek R&D opportunities that encompass a whole systems approach
- Maintain Soil Biology Trial at the Long Term Research Site
- Raise profile of the Long Term Research Site and attract research bodies wishing to conduct trials of a long term nature to the site.
- Maintain trial program at the Long Term Research Site
- Ensure R&D protocols are adhered to

Increasing adoption of new technologies

- Benchmark adoption levels of Liebe members every three years.
- Conduct farmer case studies and economic analysis on growers that have adopted new technology
- Conduct on-farm demonstrations and economic modelling with growers that are considering technology adoption

Extend Results of Research, Development and Validation

- Conduct a Spring Field Day at the main trial site
- Conduct field walks at satellite sites and the Long Term Research Site
- Hold an annual Crop Updates to prepare growers for the coming season
- Extend results in an annual R&D Book and review priority research at a trials review day
- Promote results to the wider community
- Assist in attracting members to events by having a high profile guest speaker
- Develop and maintain a website

Performance Measures

- Research and Development advisory committee to meet at least three times a year to develop R&D priorities and discuss issues with industry partners
- Conduct an annual membership survey to understand farming issues and priorities
- Conduct a technical audit every three years to benchmark technology adoption
- Conduct an evaluation of every event
- Review website contents monthly.

Members with High Business & Farming Aptitude

Rationale

Making good decisions is a product of understanding the issues and the opportunities and risks associated with these. By providing training in areas of skills gaps within the membership ensures members have the capacity to function effectively and efficiently to improve their businesses and reach their potential. This strategy will give Liebe members access to professional training conducted in areas of identified skills gaps as well as well-targeted, high quality, independent and factual information.

Activities

Workshops and study tours

- Use member survey and feedback to identify member requirements
- Conduct high priority workshops annually (eg Agronomic, Management, Financial, Skills, Communication)
- Conduct intra or Interstate tours, visiting innovative, interesting and sustainable farming systems.

Communication

- Members informed of local, relevant and timely information in monthly newsletters
- Early notification of all dates and opportunities to provide members with plenty of time to schedule time off farm. Add dates to GGA calendar and check with local organisations to avoid clashes
- Case studies of innovative farm practices produced

Encourage all sectors of the community to attend Liebe Group events

- Conduct events that encourage young farmers and women to be involved
- Encourage mentorship within the Liebe Group through encouraging interaction at events
- Ensure we are being inclusive when catering for events

Member Development

- Encourage greater input from non-involved members to come along to Liebe events. Bring a buddy philosophy
- Promote external workshop or development opportunities to members via email and newsletter (Investigate sources of financial assistance for members to take up development opportunities or investigate possibility for Liebe Group to provide financial assistance)
- Review standard proposal for members to receive remuneration for voluntary time
- Ensure members are being well serviced and areas for improvement are sought by phone interviews, farm visits and discussions at events
- Ensure a sense of fun is incorporated at all Liebe events

Efficient Information Management

- Cataloguing new and existing information
- Improving searchability of new and existing information
- Filtering information
- More accessible information

Performance Measures

- Conduct 3 major events annually
- Conduct 3 training workshops on prioritised subjects annually
- Produce nine monthly newsletters
- Produce six media releases per year
- Produce an annual calendar of events

A Collaborative and Connected Organisation

Rationale

The Liebe Group strives to connect its members to the industry and the media to ensure they are fairly represented and their successes are acknowledged. Collaborations with specific industry bodies allow for a participatory approach to research and a two-way feedback cycle to occur. Connections to other people whether locally, nationally or internationally allow members to share experiences with other like minded people or groups. This approach fosters innovation and progress.

2012-2017 Targets

- Recognised by stakeholders as a leading farmer group involved in rural profitability, lifestyle and natural resources

Activities

Develop and maintain linkages with agribusiness, government agencies, tertiary institutions and political organisations

- Maintain 'friends' list for publications with all industry contacts made throughout the year and reviewed yearly
- The prospectus to be made available to the above bodies with an update occurring when necessary
- Liebe Group website to be updated monthly and placed under high priority as our industry face
- Encourage relevant industry to attend General Meetings
- Attend an agricultural industry workshop developed by GGA and similar opportunities
- Maintain industry profile, so that we are approached to facilitate contact if farmers individual opinions are required.

Promote agricultural successes in rural and non-rural media

- Maintain partnership with Farm Weekly to produce monthly Liebe updates for the paper
- Invite media to main Liebe Group events and publish appropriate press releases
- Develop contact and build rapport with the West Australian and Sunday Times to promote agriculture outside of the industry
- Publish monthly updates in the local papers

Celebrate Liebe and member successes

- Keep abreast of awards and nominate appropriate members
- Hold an annual Liebe Dinner
- Cater for post-event celebrations
- Promote great achievements and member success in Liebe newsletter
- Maintain and develop Liebe Group identity through staff uniform and badges to be worn at all events, promote sale of Liebe shirts and jumpers on membership flyer.
- Develop system to recognise members who have contributed significantly to the Liebe Group

Network Building

- Utilise existing partnerships to build strong networks locally, nationally & internationally to foster innovation.
- Utilise new ways of Interacting (ie Social Media, Websites, I pads etc).
- Develop a 'sister' group with an overseas group
- Ensure members are supported to be involved in networks
- Get timely feedback from members
- Build networks at a local level through mentoring, social interaction and fostering relations between various Liebe stakeholders.

Performance Measures

- Liebe Group to be represented at appropriate industry forums such as the Grower Group Alliance forum and Agribusiness Crop Updates.
- Contribute 6 media releases per year to the farm weekly
- Hold an annual Liebe Dinner celebrating the success of the past year

Sustainable Group Finances

Rationale

Sound finances give the group the flexibility and control over its activities and progression. The Liebe Group seeks funding from different sources including membership, sponsorship and project funding.

2012-2017 Targets

- To have one years overhead costs in reserve

Activities

Finance Sub-committee to oversee Liebe Group financials and budget

- Review project funding timeline
- Prepare budget and allocations for management
- Approve finance for expensive purchase items
- Review & Account for the Liebe Group finances.
- Track progress of income and expenditure areas
- Committee meets regularly and when necessary
- Recommendation of fees and value of membership

Seek Funding

- Maintain strong links with industry partners
- Seek new sponsors and partners
- Review sponsorship guidelines and return on investment for each
- Identify & target high-return sources of funding (sponsors, programs, membership and subcontracting)

Develop membership contributions

- Review stability of membership numbers and ensure members are being well serviced

Performance Measures

- Finance Subcommittee to meet at least quarterly and make recommendations to the Management Committee
- Prepare a budget annually, to be signed off by the management committee
- Membership fees to cover administration officers position

High Performing Skilled Staff

Rationale

Maintaining and supporting appropriately skilled staff is a priority for the Liebe Group to ensure the group grows and roles are carried out effectively and efficiently. The staff are employed to manage the strategy and policies set by the management committee, by maintaining a philosophy of continual support and improvement in employees, the strategy can be implemented to its full potential.

2012-2017 Targets

- The Liebe Group will be viewed by the industry as a desired place of employment.

Activities

Support and Develop Liebe Group employees each year

- Review performance appraisal document
- Review performance, salary, goals and objectives taking care to enhance employees areas of interest
- Conduct annual performance appraisal including SWOT.
- Review new employee induction program, guided by protocol and list of training requirements
- Identify & Provide staff with Professional Development.
- Conduct fortnightly team meetings
- Ensure management maintain an ethos of supporting staff
- Develop and review a mentoring policy for employees

Maintain and increase employment base in order to meet group requirements

- Review list of all roles and responsibilities, delegating each responsibility to appropriate staff members
- Identify gaps in roles and skills, and investigate employment options
- Seek external contracting of specialist skills where necessary.
- Seek feedback from employees to develop and maintain a conducive working environment

Performance Measures

- Hold an annual performance review for each staff member
- Provide \$1000/yr training budget for each staff member
- Each staff member to meet with staff support officer at least 3 times a year, including training
- Produce an annual social calendar

Strategy Area 6

Highly Effective Governance

Rationale

Good corporate governance underpins the success of an organisation. The ability of the management committee, supporting committees and staff to make well informed and effective decisions is driven by effective process and well-supported personnel. The Liebe Group is driven by the decision making capacity of its members and as such needs to adopt a process of constant review to ensure new committee members are continually up-skilled and aware of their roles and responsibilities on the committee. Good governance maintains integrity, accountability, transparency and quality in performance and reporting of our activities.

2012-2017 Targets

- The Liebe Group will be a 'best-practice' community group, as measured by an external audit.

Activities

Management Committee, subcommittee and reporting structure

- Management Committee meet on a monthly basis at a general meeting and are responsible for governing the Liebe Group. This involves policy development.
- The Management Committee directs staff through the employment of an Executive Officer.
- A finance subcommittee of the Management Committee provide recommendations to the Management Committee. This subcommittee consists of some personnel with specialist skills in financial management.
- An ethics subcommittee of the management committee to provide recommendation to the management committee on issues of an ethical nature.
- A research & development advisory committee and womens advisory committee, advise staff on operational activities. These committee's consists of some personnel with specialist skills and interests in these areas.
- An employment advisory committee employs an Executive Officer and provides advice and support to the executive officer to employ other staff.
- The Executive Officer must sit on every Liebe Group committee.\
- Review management committee, subcommittee and advisory committees purpose and responsibilities annually at the Annual General Meeting
- Analyse resources, skills and interests required for successful Liebe Group governance and management and individually approach members to be involved in various subcommittees.
- Distribute guidelines for effective committee meetings to all committee members annually.
- Follow succession strategy to increase member involvement on committees as per succession protocol

Effective group process

- Develop 5 year strategic plan and review objectives annually as a working document
- Committee members understand their roles & responsibilities.
- Communicate Liebe Group strategy to Liebe Group stakeholders.
- Ensure inclusive processes are always used
- Maintain transparency in processes
- Develop written protocols on Liebe Group process to aid in transition of staff and group positions
- All committees and staff are to operate by the Liebe Group code of ethics

Performance Measure

- Conduct and Annual General Meeting in February every year
- Hold 9 General Meetings per year
- Review strategic plan objectives and targets annually.
- Skills Audit Conducted Annually.