

April 24th 2024

2024 South Whidbey Tilth Business Plan v4

Executive Summary

South Whidbey Tilth, commonly referred to as Tilth, is a volunteer-run nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering sustainable agriculture on South Whidbey Island. With a mission to support and promote biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture, Tilth serves as a community hub for gardeners, farmers and consumers who value environmentally responsible and socially equitable agricultural practices. Our guiding principle is to cultivate living soil, healthy agriculture and a vibrant community.

Located on an 11-acre campus in South Whidbey, Tilth operates a farmers market, farm stand, community gardens, and conducts educational classes and workshops. This business plan creates the foundation for Tilth to continue their impact, and perhaps look for ways to meaningfully expand that impact in the future.

Mission Statement

South Whidbey Tilth Association is an educational association, the purpose of which is to support and promote biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture. Our commitment is to advocate, study and teach agricultural practices consistent with stewardship of the natural world. We promote and demonstrate principles and practices of sustainable/regenerative agriculture, as well as cultivate a variety of opportunities for local market gardeners and farmers.

Vision: Our guiding principle is to cultivate living soil, healthy agriculture and a vibrant community.

Organizational Structure

Governed by an eight-member Council of Trustees, Tilth relies on a volunteer workforce to manage operations and programs. The council is responsible for strategic planning, funding and project progress, ensuring that all initiatives align with our mission to promote regenerative and equitable agriculture. It is a working board with officers and committee chairs. The standing committees are Landsteward, Education, Market, Community Relations, Membership, Finance, and Development.

The members of the council are elected by the membership, and serve two-year terms. They meet monthly via Zoom. Any member can attend and participate, however only council members vote on motions in these meetings. On major policy decisions that will impact the trajectory of Tilth, the council prepares a proposal to present to the entire membership for a vote.

Market Analysis

Our primary audience resides on South and Central Whidbey Island and includes learners, market attendees, donors, members, and partners. The audience tends to be passionate about nature, sustainable living, inclusiveness, and community engagement.

The increasing demand for locally-sourced, sustainable products presents a significant opportunity for impact and growth.

Marketing Strategy

Tilth uses a combination of media, partnerships, and community events to increase visibility and engagement. Our messaging focuses on the ways we support sustainable agriculture. We invite the South and Central Whidbey community to learn with us and participate. Additionally, strategic partnerships with local organizations enhance resource sharing and increase impact.

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The goal of our marketing is to share our knowledge to the wider audience about sustainability as well as retain and grow our membership and volunteers.

Financial Plan

- Revenue streams: Donations, grants, membership fees, garden fees, and profits from the farm stand and farmers market
- Budgeting and funding: Secure funding for campus renovations and program expansion through grants, fundraising events, and partnerships.
- Financial goals: Achieve financial sustainability by increasing revenue through special fundraising events and expanded offerings. Keep access to learning, the market, and community gardens affordable.
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Operational Plan

Five-Year Plan from 2020–2025

2024 is the fourth year of our five-year plan for the South Whidbey Tilth Association and we have made many strides towards our goals.

1. Encourage good agricultural practices and local resilience through educational offerings.
We have a monthly online class, as well as in person classes that include composting, growing, sharpening tools, preparing food, etc. We attend community events with educational materials and answer questions.
2. Make sure the Tilth land and infrastructure supports our mission.
There has been considerable clean up of the lower campus and we are getting new storage for the market.
3. Complete our farm stand to further support our growers by adding a cold storage facility.
We now have camera surveillance. The cold storage is partially funded, and we are still driving toward getting it in place.
4. Renovate the Tilth campus entrance, kitchen and classroom.
There is now an information kiosk and refurbished entrance sign. The kitchen and classroom upgrades are complete.
5. Ensure the Farmers Market continues to provide a community gathering space and venue for local growers, musicians and craft vendors.
Significant growth of the market, with more vendors. This year the buildings are being painted and the chairs, tables and umbrellas upgraded as we can afford it.

Five-Year Plan from 2026–2030

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- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Conclusion

Tilth will continue to educate, engage, and inspire individuals to participate in and support environmentally sound and socially equitable agricultural practices. If it chooses, South Whidbey Tilth is poised to expand its role as a leader in promoting sustainable/regenerative agriculture on South and Central Whidbey Island.

Next steps:

The next 5-year plan is not far off!
In what ways do we want to have impact?
Where do we want to put our hours and money next?

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Are there new things happening that we want to be a part of?
Can you think of groups we could partner with in a meaningful way?
Are there gaps in what we do now?
Are we satisfied with the audience we currently bring in for our various activities?
Do we want to grow our membership?
If you had to list Tilth's 5 goals, what would they be?