

STARTING A GLCI GROUP

HOW DO WE GET STARTED? NRCS put out a National GLCI Handbook through NRCS channels (at least one to every state) over 10 years ago. Even though some of the material is very outdated, it briefly gives a good suggested process to bring all of the organizations together in a state of all the partners that would agree that managed grazing is a viable way to raise livestock. The more partners that are involved, the more political clout with a unified voice for your state on grazing. The motive for an organization to be a part of this “group” may be everything from profit on raising livestock, to better wildlife habitat, to green space preservation. This handbook contains some of the important documents that the National GLCI suggests would make a state GLCI coalition (or other group name) be a meaningful and successful part of America’s grazing lands conservation efforts. Please see below.

GOVERNING DOCUMENT – In active groups, both GLCI and grass farmer type groups, have several documents that they have worked at developing. They have by-laws, articles of incorporation, and rules of meeting conduct or some kind of governing document. Many times this is done by non-profit status from the IRS or to work closely with a group that has this status such as an RC&D Council. This gives the GLCI or grazing group more opportunities to get grant funds from somebody besides the state and federal government (NRCS).

Some of these coalitions have a budget of six figures. I’m not talking about what GLCI money the NRCS in that state gets. This money is on top of that from grants and private corporation donations available from having the IRS 501C3 status or a partner who does. Some of these groups do not have non-profit status and still have large budgets. It is something to consider if they have not obtained that status or even talked about it.

But more than just filling a need by IRS is the fact that it gives the group some formality and avoids arguments over structure of the group in the future - like leadership (officers) etc. There must be at least a facilitator if not a chair position of the group to get passed issues where the group is evenly divided.

VISION/MISSION STATEMENT – The group needs a direction that will tell them what they would like to see accomplished with their efforts.

PARTNERSHIPS – Inclusion of Academic, Extension, Public Lands Agencies, NRCS, Research groups, etc are vital advisors. Besides the producer groups, the partnership allows for leveraging of funds and projects.

STRATEGIC PLAN - From there, a 5 to 10 year strategic plan should be developed. For the first strategic plan a 5 year ones better, it seems more attainable than 10 years from now. This is to get the big picture of **where or who the group as a whole wants to be** or become in the near future. Some groups get an experienced professional facilitator and take a full day (or two evenings) to accomplish this and get a quality plan.

After that is done the group then takes each year and forms action lists. These have a high chance of becoming a reality the more the group gets detailed in a written action item. These also become an automatic agenda item(s) at various times of each year for all future meetings after that.

FOR EXAMPLE: The group says that they want to reach the goal in year 1 of the strategic/action plan of becoming more visible as the source for grazing information in their state. In other words they would become the gateway for anyone wanting any kind of grazing information in their state. The group did several things in an action item plan to accomplish this.

1. Appoint a small committee to get bids/information of what agriculture/grazing group websites cost to develop and then maintain per year by August 1, for example, and report in writing to the group.
2. Appoint a small committee to choose websites that have the look and format that are similar to the group's from across the US or even Canada, New Zealand, Australia, etc. and recommend the 3 best to the group by August 1 also.
3. The group will make a decision on both these items at the August meeting.
4. Form a committee to raise XXXX dollars for the cost of the website the group chose by December 1.
5. Form a committee at the August meeting to solicit bids from at least three website designers upon showing the preferred look/format of the group by December 1.
6. Hire a website designer at the December meeting to create the group's website by February 1. This type of plan has a high chance of getting accomplished during the year.

This is a real scenario of a GLCI coalition. There are also other states in this same example that one of the partners agreed to do this item at their own expense – their contribution to the group.

So you can see it takes more effort of your group by planning things this way, but it will accomplish more. Observations have been that the groups that are skipping all of these steps and have no formal written items seem to struggle much more at accomplishing spoken or even written goals.

Example - Detailed Annual Action Items Accomplishments - detailed action items and the strategic plan are shown to the partner members at an annual meeting of the group and/or meetings of the partner representative's organizations – sheep breeders association, cattlemen's association, land grant university and extension, etc. This is then used to update the group at every meeting (helps with the agenda) and to update or change items as other things change in life. Obviously, after 5 years, the group creates another strategic plan. Montana GLCI even has a marketing plan as part of their big strategic plan, as in TV, radio and written media channels. So your GLCI coalition, group, committee or even as a subcommittee of another group (grass farmers association, AFGC state chapter, etc.) can accomplish great things for grazing management and forages in your state.