**Finger Lakes Cheese Alliance (formerly known as the Finger Lakes Cheese Trail)**

…Fresh Artisanal Cheese from our family farms to your table(marketing tag line)

Change adopted 9-11-15

**Mission**

To support the sustainability of the artisan cheese community in the Finger Lakes region of New York by promoting the production and sale of artisan cheeses, facilitating consumer education, and encouraging tourism to the region to benefit member producers.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the Alliance is to manage the organization for the members and by doing so, provide a sound base from which to direct a program of promotion, public relations, information and education.

**Membership Criteria**

1. The milk and/or cheese production facility is owned or operated by the members, and/or a subcontractor processing for the member, must be licensed by NYS Dept. of Agriculture & Markets or applicable regulatory body to conduct business, and market cheese under their own brand/label.
2. Must fulfill at least one of the following:

-produce cheese within the Finger Lakes

-produce milk in the Finger Lakes and have at least a portion of that milk processed into cheese for their own brand

 3. Must participate regularly in cheese alliance events.

 4. Must pay dues annually by the first of March of the calendar year.

 5. Must attend at least 2 alliance membership meetings per year and is expected to respond to

 email communication and provide input into key organizations decisions.

Each member cheese maker has one vote.

A quorum consists of a simple majority present at a member meeting.

**Organization**

At present the Cheese Alliance operates as an un-incorporated association.

Cheese makers who are members of the Alliance are the voting members.

**Member benefits**

-promotion - festival, social media/PR, press, stickers, brochures, etc.

-events – open days, cheese festival entrance free, partner events with allied agriculture sectors (wine/cider, etc)

-education - industry sharing/networking/contacts/voice - develop industry capacity

-branding the region’s cheese as a resulting raising product recognition and sales

-supporting development and expansion of an outstanding cheese producing region

**Activities**

-partner events with wineries, cider alliance, etc.

-open days

-festival

-social media

-promotion

**Management structure**

The organization shall be primarily governed by an executive committee who is chosen from among the members.

Executive Committee members: Chair; Vice-Chair; Secretary; Treasurer; plus any paid staff who are non-voting members of the executive committee (3 min - 5 max)

Executive Committee Duties: manage the affairs of the alliance, develop an annual operating budget, meet monthly at minimum to plan events, make decisions, address emerging issues, plan member meetings, communication/seek input from members, hire staff/contractors, sign contracts, and other such business of the alliance as arises

-- Meet monthly by phone or email and in person at least 4 times a year

--Plan a full Member meeting at least 2 x a year…early spring (March) / fall meeting (Sept/October?)

Officer Duties:

Chair – set meetings and agendas, chair meetings, key contact/spokesperson for alliance

Vice-Chair – work closely with chair to plan meetings; communication with members

Secretary – keep minutes, other communication as needed

Treasurer – receive dues, banking, pay bills, provide financial reports, draft operating budget

Contract staff: position descriptions/contracts to be developed as needed for managing and marketing the organization. Contracts to be reviewed/renewed annually and approved by the executive committee.

Voting on Executive Committee:

Nominations shall be made at the fall member meeting. Committee members shall begin their assignment at the start of the calendar year. An executive committee member shall serve for 2 years and may be reappointed for a second term.

Schedule for appointing executive committee

1. Prior to fall member meeting, request nominations (members may nominate themselves). Receive and review nominations at the fall member meeting. Post nominees to all members and vote no later than November 1.

(NOTE: if there is no contest, executive committee members can be appointed at the fall meeting)

1. Nominees and siting executive committee members meet in Nov/Dec to plan transition, and work plan for upcoming year.
2. Executive committee members are fully installed in January and serve for a full 2 year term.

**Dues – set by the executive committee, approved by all members annually by Nov/Dec.**

**Pay based on previous year production – due by March 1.**

Small under 5000 lbs – $300

Medium – 5001-10,000 lbs - $450

Large over 10,001 lbs - $600

Associate $100 (individual biz) – receive a discount to come to festival