



# Strategic Alliance



# Framework

An agreement between the National Plant Board (NPB) Board of Directors (BOD) and the Plant Protection and Quarantine Management Team (PPQ MT)

**The National Plant Board (NPB)** provides national representation for each of the regional plant boards; fosters effective and harmonized plant health programs; acts as an information clearinghouse on plant pest prevention and regulatory matters; provides for a discussion of principles, policies, and methods; and promotes efficiency, harmony, and uniformity in and among the states in the field of plant pest prevention and regulation.

**Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ)** safeguards U.S. agriculture and natural resources against the entry, establishment, and spread of economically and environmentally significant pests, and facilitates the safe international trade of agricultural products. PPQ’s commitment is to ensure healthy plants and safe trade for a strong and prosperous America.

Together, the **NPB and PPQ** agree to partner to use our respective state and federal authorities, resources, and expertise to safeguard plant health and enable safe trade.

Signed:



Steven H. Long  
President, National Plant Board



Dr. Mark L Davidson  
PPQ Deputy Administrator

11/30/2022

Signature Date

11/30/2022

Signature Date

## **Introduction**

The NPB and PPQ have a longstanding partnership between the two organizations, sharing priorities and benefiting from a collaborative approach. To strengthen our partnership, we have formed a strategic alliance—a commitment between two organizations to pursue mutual goals. Our strategic alliance is a continuum of engagement from basic information sharing to coordination of complementary activities, to full collaboration with integrated plant health safeguarding efforts.

Our respective authorities and capacities result in varying levels of interdependence on different plant health issues. Through effective communication, we build better understanding of the needs and issues that exist locally, consider stakeholder perspectives, and identify the regional and national context and political landscape in which those needs and to address issues. In this context, we work together at these organizational levels:

- between the State Plant Regulatory Official and the State Plant Health Director
- between the State Plant Regulatory Official and PPQ Program Cross Functional Working Groups and Administrative Management
- between the leadership of both the National Plant Board and Plant Protection and Quarantine

Diversity in plant health risks requires the coordination of efforts across organizational levels be flexible in order to respond to each unique situation. It is important that we clearly communicate about the extent of integration on each issue or project to determine the appropriate role for each partner organization. In addition, we consider the degree of participation and informational needs of other stakeholders such as the public, industry, tribes, universities/extension services, and non-profit organizations.

The agreements outlined in this document are between the NPB and PPQ and reflect the organizational commitment to communication, collaboration, and coordination, and do not change the relationship that exists between PPQ and individual states or regions or supersede any local agreements.

## **Stronger Together**

The NPB and PPQ partner to use federal and state authorities, resources, and expertise to safeguard plant health and enable safe trade.

NPB states provide:

- Local knowledge and relationships with industry, other units of state and local government, and other stakeholders
- Consensus building among the states
- Perspective across the states/regions
- State authority, when warranted
- Resources for cooperative programs
- Pest evaluation and response
- Technical and scientific expertise

PPQ provides:

- International trade agreements
- The national regulatory framework for interstate and international issues/commerce
- Oversight of the federal export certification program
- The national perspective/input of industries and other national organizations
- Federal authority, when warranted
- Resources for cooperative programs
- Pest evaluation and response
- Technical and scientific expertise
- Relationships with other federal agencies (i.e., U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of the Interior.)

## **Nature of the Relationship**

The NPB and PPQ have a strong working relationship characterized by:

- a desire for a true alliance/partnership in which the organizations work side by side and engage early on issues of mutual importance
- a consultative relationship with a commitment to communication and resolution of issues
- a willingness to use each other's strengths
- support from affected stakeholders

## **Communication/Information Sharing**

In many cases, we reach consensus on how to best manage issues of national scope and importance. In cases where we do not reach consensus, we aspire to understand, accept, and articulate our differences clearly and constructively. Even when we do not reach consensus, we can be united and clear in communicating our differing perspectives and our respective roles.

Regardless of the outcome of our discussions, effective and proactive communication is essential to the success of the strategic alliance. We agree that optimal communication is:

- specific, proactive, and timely
- clear in articulating expectations, realities, and limitations
- focused on producing alignment and results when circumstances support a collaborative response
- consistent with agreed-upon protocols within and among organizations
- unified in messaging to each organization about agreements, decisions, and areas of disagreement

To sustain optimal communication, we believe that:

- there is an ongoing need to train NPB and PPQ staff to ensure operational awareness of the benefits of the alliance and implementation of protocols and processes that support the alliance
- we sometimes need a broader understanding of decisions and agreements within each organization
- sometimes issues should be elevated appropriately and transparently within an organization

## **Decision Making**

We agree that effective decision making involves several steps and should include a mechanism for each party to address concerns about any aspect of the process. Within the context of decision making, we agree on the following fundamentals:

- When decisions affect both the states and PPQ, it is important to engage people in both organizations early. Decision making and planning necessitate regular outreach at regular intervals. Outreach includes:
  - Communications plan(s)
  - Information sharing
  - Stakeholder meetings
  - Consultations
  - Communication regarding pending issues including upcoming decisions about budget, policy, and programs
- Not all members of an organization can be involved in every decision. When decisions impact both the states and PPQ, every effort is made to include both organizations in those discussions.

- Once decisions are made and communicated, the NPB and PPQ make every effort to ensure that decisions are implemented, recognizing NPB's limitations authorities in influencing state members.
- When either party is concerned about any part of the process, the issue is discussed between the NPB and PPQ. Every effort is made to resolve the issue and prevent similar issues in the future.
- When agreement cannot be reached and either the NPB or PPQ believes an issue should be elevated, each party should have the opportunity to make their respective leadership chains aware (NASDA and USDA).

## **Evaluation and Metrics**

The NPB BOD and PPQ MT agree to assess this alliance at least annually and to use that opportunity to evaluate progress on identified strategic priorities (what is important to the organizations) and strategic initiatives (the projects that contribute to achieving the strategic priorities), as well as to identify new strategic priorities and/or strategic initiatives that require a joint effort. The NPB BOD and PPQ MT agree to conclude strategic initiatives that are completed or no longer relevant. The NPB BOD and PPQ MT also agree that there may not be any strategic initiatives some years. The NPB BOD and PPQ MT agree to review the strategic alliance framework document every five years.

Although we review this alliance annually, it is important to maintain open lines of communication and address opportunities, issues, and grievances with each partner as soon as possible.