Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI)

Board Orientation Handbook

U.S. Tart Cherry Industry

October 2026

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Overview & How to Use This Handbook

This Board Orientation Handbook is designed to provide a clear and practical overview of how the **Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI)** operates, how it fits within the broader industry structure, and how Board members contribute effectively.

The document is organized to build understanding in a logical sequence:

- **Sections 1–2:** Introduce the U.S. tart cherry industry, explain the distinct roles and geographic scope of CIAB, CMI, and MCC, and describe how CMI works with CIAB and MCC.
- **Sections 3–6:** Explain CMI's purpose, organizational structure, responsibilities, and your role as a Board member.
- **Sections 7–10:** Describe the governance principles, decision-making framework, and meeting practices that guide effective Board service.
- **Sections 11–12:** Highlight the Board's FY27 strategic priorities and the commitments expected of every Board member.
- **Sections 13–14:** Provide key resources and reference materials to support your ongoing service.

This handbook is intended to serve as both:

- A foundational orientation resource for new Board members
- A practical reference guide for ongoing Board service

You are not expected to read this handbook cover to cover in one sitting. Instead, use it as a reference whenever questions arise during your Board service.

If you have questions or would like additional context, **CMI staff leadership** is available to provide support.

1. Welcome & Purpose

Welcome—and thank you for your willingness to serve the U.S. tart cherry industry.

Whether you are joining the Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI) Board for the first time or continuing your service, **your leadership plays an important role in the future of our industry.**

The U.S. tart cherry industry is supported by three distinct organizations—the Cherry Industry Administrative Board (CIAB), the Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI), and the Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC). Each Board operates independently, with its own authority, responsibilities, and geographic scope. CMI works with CIAB and MCC; their activities may align while each Board retains authority over its own decisions. These distinct roles support the U.S. tart cherry industry's overarching purpose:

To Revitalize and Sustain the U.S. Tart Cherry Industry—Economically and Culturally —for Generations to Come.

The Cherry Marketing Institute exists to build demand and expand market opportunities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries. Through strategic marketing, communications, research, research translation, and market development, CMI works to increase demand, improve grower returns, and strengthen the industry's long-term vitality.

This orientation handbook is designed to help you understand:

- How the U.S. tart cherry industry is organized;
- The unique role CMI plays within that larger system;
- How CMI works with CIAB and MCC to support aligned work while each Board retains independent authority; and
- What is expected of you as a CMI Board member.

Our goal is not simply to provide information, but to help you understand how your service contributes to something much larger than any one organization.

Our work should advance CMI's responsibilities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries, while contributing to the shared tart cherry industry purpose.

CMI's Tart and Sweet Cherry Responsibilities

CMI builds demand and expands market opportunities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries. Our tart cherry work serves an industry spanning seven growing states: Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin. Our sweet cherry responsibilities are limited to Michigan.

This difference in geographic scope helps explain why we identify collectively as the U.S. Tart Cherry Industry and why tart cherries are the primary focus of our shared strategy. Michigan sweet cherries remain an important part of CMI's responsibilities and must be considered in the Board's priorities, investment decisions, and oversight.

References in this handbook to U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries reflect CMI's market-development focus. Maintaining clarity about variety and U.S. origin supports product differentiation, grower value, and long-term demand. Each organization's responsibilities are governed by its own authority and scope.

2. How the Industry Works Together

The U.S. tart cherry industry is supported by three distinct organizations with complementary roles. CMI works with CIAB and MCC, while each organization maintains its own authority, responsibilities, and geographic scope. Each Board independently makes decisions within its own authority. Each contributes through the following work:

- **The Cherry Industry Administrative Board (CIAB)** administers Federal Marketing Order No. 930 under USDA oversight. The order regulates the handling of covered tart cherries grown in its defined seven-state production area.
- **The Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI)** builds demand and expands market opportunities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries through strategic marketing, communications, research, and market development.
- **The Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC)** strengthens Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry through research, education, and strategic investments that support growers, processors, and the long-term vitality of the industry.

Other state, regional, and international organizations also support their respective industries. Collaboration may arise where priorities align.

How the Funding and Work Connect

MCC directs 95% of Michigan tart and sweet cherry assessments to CMI and retains 5% for MCC's work. CMI also receives tart cherry assessment funding from Utah and Wisconsin and administers approved grant resources. CIAB funds authorized programs through assessments under the federal marketing order. CMI carries out CIAB-funded work subject to CIAB approval and applicable USDA requirements. Each Board independently oversees its own approved investments.

MCC identifies the horticultural research needs and priorities of Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry. CMI funds that research through its Board-approved investments. For aligned work, each organization retains its own approval, funding, and oversight responsibilities; staff and program partners carry out the approved work.

Tart Cherry Industry Organizations at a Glance

Independent boards serving the cherry industry

OUR SHARED INDUSTRY PURPOSE

Revitalize and sustain the U.S. tart cherry industry—economically and culturally—for generations to come.

	CIAB Cherry Industry Administrative Board	CMI Cherry Marketing Institute	MCC Michigan Cherry Committee
LEGAL STRUCTURE	Federal Marketing Order No. 930	501(c)(6) nonprofit	State statutory authority
PRIMARY ROLE	Administers Federal Marketing Order No. 930 for producers and handlers within the regulated production area.	Builds demand for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries, and funds research.	Identifies Michigan growers' orchard research priorities and supports education and grower involvement.
INDUSTRY FOCUS	Tart cherries covered by the federal marketing order: seven states and nine districts.	U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.	Michigan tart and sweet cherries.
PRIMARY FUNDING	Handler assessments under Federal Marketing Order No. 930.	95% of Michigan tart and sweet cherry assessments, plus funding from Utah and Wisconsin tart cherry assessments.	Retains 5% of Michigan tart and sweet cherry assessments.
AUTHORITY AND OVERSIGHT	USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)	CMI Board, under its bylaws	Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)

How the Organizations Connect

CMI works with CIAB and MCC. Each board retains independent decision-making authority over its own functions.

MCC directs 95% of its Michigan tart and sweet cherry assessments to CMI.

Michigan sweet cherries: CMI and MCC also serve Michigan's sweet cherry industry.

3. What is the Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI)?

The Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI) builds demand and expands market opportunities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.

Through strategic marketing, communications, research, research translation, market development, and export promotion, CMI builds awareness, expands commercial opportunities, and supports the industry's long-term success.

As a CMI Board member, you help guide the organization's strategic direction by approving priorities, allocating resources, and providing oversight of Board-approved programs and investments. These responsibilities encompass CMI's work on behalf of both U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.

Because consumer preferences, marketplace trends, scientific understanding, and commercial opportunities are constantly evolving, strategic leadership is essential. CMI exists to help the industry respond to those changes—building demand today while creating opportunities for tomorrow.

4. Why is CMI Organized as a 501(c)(6) Nonprofit?

The **Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI)** is organized as a **501(c)(6) nonprofit trade association**. This type of organization is specifically designed to advance the common business interests of an industry rather than the interests of any one individual or company.

Unlike the Cherry Industry Administrative Board (CIAB), which operates under the authority of a Federal Marketing Order and USDA/AMS oversight, CMI operates as an independent nonprofit corporation governed by its Board of Directors.

This organizational structure provides the flexibility needed to lead strategic marketing, communications, research, market development, and other initiatives that support the long-term success of U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.

As part of this structure:

- CMI is governed by its Board of Directors in accordance with its Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws.
- The Board establishes the organization's strategic direction, approves budgets and major initiatives, and provides oversight of its activities.
- Staff leadership manages day-to-day operations and implements the Board's direction.
- CMI works with CIAB and MCC while each Board retains independent governance, responsibilities, and decision-making authority.

This governance structure enables CMI to remain focused on its mission while adapting to changing marketplace conditions, emerging opportunities, and the evolving needs of the U.S. tart cherry industry.

5. CMI Responsibilities

The Cherry Marketing Institute builds demand and expands market opportunities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries. Through marketing, communications, research, and market development, CMI helps strengthen the long-term success of the industries it serves.

The Board guides this work through five primary responsibilities.

Build Demand

Set strategic priorities and approve investments that strengthen demand, expand product usage, and create market opportunities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries. These investments may support consumer awareness, foodservice and ingredient applications, export development, and other opportunities aligned with CMI's mission.

Support Research

Approve research investments that address the needs of the industries CMI serves. For Michigan horticultural research, MCC identifies the research needs and priorities, and CMI funds the work through its Board-approved investments. Support the translation and communication of findings so research informs industry decisions and long-term success.

Invest Industry Resources

Allocate CMI's financial resources to Board-approved priorities. Evaluate proposed investments based on their purpose, expected benefit, available funding, and alignment with the organization's responsibilities. Recognize CMI's tart and sweet cherry responsibilities when establishing priorities and evaluating results.

Set Policy & Provide Organizational Oversight

The Board sets organizational policy and strategic direction, provides oversight of the President, and evaluates the results of Board-approved programs.

Staff leadership develops strategies, program proposals, and day-to-day operating procedures; implements approved initiatives; manages partners; and reports on progress within approved policies, budgets, and delegated authority.

Ensure Responsible Stewardship

Maintain sound governance, fiscal responsibility, and accountability for CMI's resources. Ensure decisions and investments remain consistent with CMI's mission, governing documents, and applicable funding requirements. Through thoughtful oversight, the Board helps ensure that CMI's work delivers value to the industries it serves.

6. What This Means for You as a Board Member

Serving on the CMI Board means helping guide the organization and steward its resources in support of U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries. Your role is to provide strategic leadership, exercise sound judgment, and help advance CMI's mission.

As a CMI Board member, you will:

- Set the strategic direction of the organization.
- Approve budgets and major initiatives.
- Bring your experience and perspective while acting in the best interests of CMI and the industries it serves.
- Ensure Board decisions remain aligned with CMI's mission, governing documents, and applicable funding requirements.
- Provide oversight while empowering staff leadership to execute the Board's direction.

Staff leadership manages day-to-day operations and implements Board-approved programs within approved policies, budgets, and delegated authority. Together, the Board and staff leadership work in partnership to advance CMI's priorities and support long-term industry success.

Board Structure and Service

CMI's By-Laws provide for seven voting Directors. Five are nominated by MCC: three from the Michigan grower community and two from the Michigan processor community. The remaining seats are for Representative Directors from other financially supporting states or countries, as provided in the By-Laws.

Selection and Terms

The CMI Board elects Directors following the applicable nomination process. MCC-nominated Directors serve three-year terms. Representative Directors serve terms set by the state or country they represent. Vacancies are filled through the same selection process for the remainder of the term.

Officers and the President

The Board elects its Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer annually. Officers carry out the duties assigned by the By-Laws and Board. The President oversees employees and reports to the full Board. The President is an officer of CMI and does not serve as a Board member.

Honorary Directors

The Board may appoint eligible Honorary Directors for renewable one-year terms. They serve without a vote and are not counted toward quorum. Eligibility requirements are set out in the By-Laws.

Consult the current Board roster for Directors, officer assignments and terms. Michelle Wright can help you locate the roster and governing documents. Committee responsibilities are explained in Section 9.

References: CMI By-Laws, Article III, Sections 1–4; Article IV.

7. Governance Foundations

Effective governance is the foundation of a high-performing Board.

Every CMI Board member shares responsibility for providing strategic leadership, exercising sound judgment, and acting in the best interests of the organization. CMI's mission encompasses U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries, and Board decisions should reflect those responsibilities.

The following principles guide effective Board service.

Govern Strategically

The CMI Board:

- Sets the organization's strategic direction.
- Approves budgets and major initiatives.
- Provides oversight of marketing, research, market development, and resource allocation.
- Evaluates organizational performance and progress toward Board-approved priorities.

Empower Staff Leadership

CMI staff leadership:

- Develops strategies and recommendations for Board consideration.
- Executes Board-approved programs and initiatives.
- Manages day-to-day operations within approved policies, budgets, and delegated authority.
- Provides information, analysis, and progress reports to support Board decision-making and oversight.

Fulfill Your Fiduciary Duty

As a Board member, you are entrusted with:

- Acting in good faith and in the best interests of CMI.
- Preparing thoughtfully, asking questions, and exercising informed judgment.
- Ensuring the responsible and effective use of CMI's resources.
- Disclosing conflicts of interest before discussion and following CMI's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Your business and regional experience strengthen Board discussions. Use that perspective to help advance CMI's mission and the interests of the industries it serves.

Think Independently. Lead Collectively.

- Bring your individual experience and perspective to every discussion.
- Respect and consider differing viewpoints.
- Represent Board decisions accurately and support their implementation, while respecting a member's right to record a dissenting vote.

Operate Within Your Authority

As the governing Board of the Cherry Marketing Institute:

- Conduct Board activities in accordance with CMI's Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, policies, and applicable legal and funding requirements.
- Set direction, approve budgets and major initiatives, and provide oversight while empowering staff leadership to manage day-to-day operations.
- Ensure organizational decisions remain aligned with CMI's mission and purpose.

Strong governance begins with understanding roles and responsibilities. The next section describes how the Board and staff leadership work together to support effective decision-making and execution.

8. How We Work Together

Strong governance depends on more than clearly defined roles—it also depends on how we work together.

Effective Board service is built on trust, open communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to advancing CMI's mission and the long-term success of the industries it serves.

When Board members and staff leadership understand their respective roles and work collaboratively, the Board can focus its time where it adds the greatest value.

We Each Have a Role

Clear decision-making is central to effective governance.

- **Board:**
  - Set direction and priorities
  - Approve budgets and major initiatives
  - Provide strategic oversight and guidance
- **Staff Leadership:**
  - Lead execution of Board-approved initiatives
  - Manage day-to-day operations
  - Develop recommendations and strategic options for Board consideration
  - Implement Board direction and oversee programs and partners
- **Together:**
  - Share industry perspective
  - Discuss opportunities and challenges
  - Challenge ideas and recommendations

When these roles are clear, decision-making becomes more efficient, focused, and effective.

Where the Board Adds the Most Value

The Board's role is not to manage day-to-day execution, but to focus on areas where its perspective and leadership are most impactful:

- **Set** strategic direction.
- **Make** key decisions.
- **Provide** industry insight and perspective.

Focusing on these areas ensures that Board time is used where it matters most.

How We Work Together

Effective Board operations are grounded in a few key principles:

- **Clarity of roles** – Understanding where Board and staff leadership responsibilities begin and end
- **Trust** – Confidence in the roles and expertise of both Board and staff leadership
- **Open communication** – Constructive, respectful dialogue
- **No surprises** – Ensuring transparency and alignment on key issues

What This Looks Like in Practice

Examples of how this structure applies:

Strategic Planning & Investment

- **Board:** Reviews, evaluates, and approves the strategic direction and investment priorities.
- **Staff Leadership:** Develops the plan and leads implementation.

Market Development Initiatives

- **Board:** Approves strategic priorities and major investments.
- **Staff Leadership:** Develops programs, manages partners, and executes initiatives.

Budget & Resource Allocation

- **Board:** Approves priorities and funding levels and monitors financial performance.
- **Staff Leadership:** Manages spending within approved budgets and delegated authority and provides financial reports to support Board oversight.

Meeting Expectations

Board meetings are designed to:

- Focus on key decisions and strategic discussions
- Provide the information needed to make informed decisions
- Allow for meaningful discussion and input

Board members are expected to:

- Come prepared and engaged
- Focus on the issues at hand
- Contribute constructively to discussions
- Bring their business and regional perspectives while putting CMI's mission and responsibilities ahead of individual business interests.

Bottom Line

Effective governance is not about limiting involvement—it is about focusing it where it has the greatest impact.

Clarity in how we operate enables stronger decisions, better execution, and greater outcomes for the industry.

9. Decision Authority & Accountability

Effective governance depends on clear decision authority. Understanding which decisions belong to the Board, which belong to staff leadership, and which require collaboration helps ensure accountability, efficient operations, and effective use of Board time.

While Board members and staff leadership work closely together, they have distinct responsibilities that complement one another.

Decision Ownership

Board Governs

The Board governs matters that establish the organization's strategic direction, including:

- Strategic priorities and direction
- Annual budgets and resource allocation
- Major industry initiatives and programs
- Organizational policies and governance

Staff Leads

Staff leadership leads execution by:

- Executing Board-approved initiatives
- Managing day-to-day operational decisions within approved policies, budgets, and delegated authority.
- Developing recommendations and strategic options for Board consideration
- Overseeing program implementation and external partners

Committee Authority

The Board may establish committees and assign their duties. Committees report their research and findings to the full Board and may not take action without full Board consent. They may not amend the Articles of Incorporation or By-Laws, adopt a merger or conversion agreement, fill Board vacancies, or set Director compensation. Consult CMI's By-Laws, Article V, and the relevant Board action for each committee's assignment.

Shared Responsibilities

Effective governance depends on collaboration between the Board and staff leadership. Together they:

- Share industry insight and expertise
- Evaluate opportunities and challenges
- Discuss strategic options
- Strengthen decision-making through open dialogue

In Practice

A helpful way to understand these responsibilities:

- **Board:** Sets strategic direction, approves budgets and major initiatives, establishes organizational policy, and provides oversight.
- **Staff Leadership:** Determines how to implement Board-approved work within approved policies, budgets, and delegated authority.

Specific decision-making authority is established by CMI's governing documents, Board-approved policies, and formal delegations of authority, subject to applicable legal and funding requirements.

Why This Matters

Clarity in decision-making helps to:

- Focus Board time on the most important issues
- Enable staff leadership to execute efficiently
- Reduce duplication and confusion
- Support better, faster decisions

10. Board Meetings: What to Expect

Effective Board Meetings

Board meetings provide the opportunity for members to fulfill their governance responsibilities, establish strategic direction, and make informed decisions in the best interests of CMI and its mission. They also create space to share industry perspectives, evaluate opportunities, and provide oversight of the organization's work.

Our Approach

Board meetings should focus on strategy—not simply reporting information.

CMI Board meetings are designed to encourage informed discussion, thoughtful decision-making, and long-term strategic thinking. Routine operational updates are provided to keep Board members informed, while meeting time is intentionally focused on the issues where Board leadership provides the greatest value.

As a result, Board members are expected to arrive prepared, having reviewed all pre-read materials in advance so meeting time can be devoted to discussion rather than information sharing.

Before the Meeting

Effective governance begins before the meeting starts.

Board members are expected to:

- Review all meeting materials and pre-read documents.
- Identify questions or areas requiring clarification.
- Consider the strategic implications of agenda items.
- Arrive prepared to actively participate in discussion.

Preparation enables stronger decisions and more productive Board meetings.

During the Meeting

Board members are expected to:

- Participate actively and respectfully.
- Listen to understand differing perspectives.
- Ask thoughtful questions.
- Focus discussion on strategic issues rather than operational details.
- Support a culture of professionalism, trust, and collaboration.
- Respect differing viewpoints while working toward sound decisions.

Healthy discussion strengthens governance. Once a decision is made, members should represent the Board's action accurately and support implementation while respecting the right to record a dissenting vote.

Agenda Structure

To help Board members prepare appropriately, agenda items are organized into three categories:

Pre-Read

Information provided in advance for Board awareness. Discussion during the meeting is limited unless clarification is requested.

Discussion

Items requiring Board dialogue, feedback, or strategic input before future action.

Discussion & Board Action

Items requiring formal Board consideration and, when appropriate, a motion and vote.

This structure allows meeting time to focus where Board engagement creates the greatest value.

Financial Statements

Review financial statements for the reporting period identified in the agenda. Record the review and any approval required by CMI's governing documents and financial procedures in the meeting minutes.

How Board Decisions Are Made

When an agenda item requires Board action, the Chair guides members through the decision-making process:

- A member makes a motion stating the proposed action; another member seconds it when required by CMI's applicable meeting procedures.
- Board members discuss the proposal, ask questions, and consider relevant information.
- After discussion, the Chair calls for a vote in accordance with CMI's By-Laws and applicable meeting procedures.
- The decision is recorded in the meeting minutes.

Board members should understand basic parliamentary procedures, including motions, seconds when required, discussion, and CMI's quorum and voting criteria. The Chair and staff leadership help members participate confidently. CMI's By-Laws establish the following requirements for Board action:

- Quorum: A majority of the Board's voting members must be present for the Board to transact business.
- Voting: Unless law, the By-Laws or the Articles of Incorporation require otherwise, a matter is decided by a majority of the Directors present at a meeting with a quorum.
- Honorary Directors: They do not vote and are not counted toward quorum.

Members must disclose conflicts of interest before discussion and follow CMI's Conflict of Interest Policy when participating in a decision. The Chair and staff can help identify the applicable procedure before discussion or a vote.

Meeting Participation and Records

Remote participation counts as attendance when the communication method allows everyone participating to hear one another.

The By-Laws provide for public Board and committee meetings. A closed session requires a majority vote of the Directors. Follow the applicable notice and meeting procedures when arranging meetings.

Action without a meeting requires the written or electronic consent of all Board members then in office, or all members of the relevant committee, unless the governing documents provide otherwise. These consents must be filed with the minutes.

References: CMI By-Laws, Article III, Sections 5–9, 11 and 13–15.

Strategic Questions

Throughout each meeting, Board members are encouraged to evaluate recommendations through a strategic lens by asking:

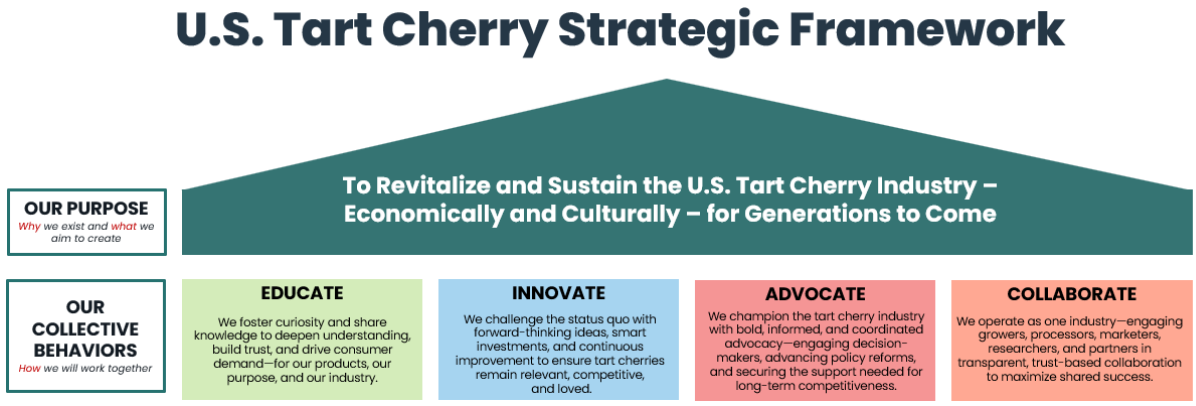
- Does this support CMI's mission and Board-approved strategic priorities?
- How does it advance CMI's work on behalf of U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries or Michigan sweet cherries?
- Is this an appropriate use of CMI's resources, consistent with the purpose and requirements of the funding?
- What results do we expect, and how will we evaluate progress and effectiveness?
- How will this contribute to grower profitability and the long-term viability of the industry it is intended to benefit?

These questions help ensure Board discussions remain focused on governance rather than day-to-day management.

Our Collective Board Behaviors

The shared industry framework identifies four collective behaviors. CMI members apply them within the organization's responsibilities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.

Use these behaviors to support informed discussion and effective governance in person and online.



EDUCATE — Come Prepared

Review the Board packet and pre-read materials, identify questions, and share knowledge that supports informed decisions.

INNOVATE — Think Strategically

Consider evidence, new ideas, and long-term opportunities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.

ADVOCATE — Contribute Your Perspective

Bring your experience, ask thoughtful questions, and help shape decisions that advance CMI's mission.

COLLABORATE — Value Every Voice

Listen respectfully, welcome differing views, and make room for every member to contribute. Remain engaged and minimize distractions; when participating virtually, keep your camera on whenever possible.

11. FY27 Strategic Priorities

CMI's FY27 priorities connect the U.S. tart cherry industry strategy with the organization's responsibilities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.

The shared tart cherry strategy has three mandates:

- **Improve Industry Profitability — Starting with the Grower**
- **Sustain Marketplace Growth — Focus Where It Matters Most**
- **Unite the Industry — Build Capacity for the Future**

CIAB and CMI advance aligned strategic priorities through separate budgets, responsibilities, and approval processes. Each Board independently determines its organization's actions. The CMI Board governs CMI's investments and oversees their results. Alignment does not transfer authority or funding responsibility between organizations.

CMI's FY27 investments are organized into the following four areas:

1) Market Development

Why It Matters

Building demand and expanding commercial opportunities support the long-term value of U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries. FY27 concentrates marketplace work on the audiences and opportunities identified through the industry strategy.

FY27 Focus

- Support domestic tart cherry marketing and promotion, with an industry focus on foodservice and ingredient buyers.
- Continue export marketing and market development.
- Contribute to coordinated industry communications that strengthen product differentiation, communicate credible health research, and build marketplace understanding of U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and True Tart™. Communications must accurately reflect the science and comply with applicable U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) communication requirements.
- Administer MAP and RAPP grant resources in accordance with program requirements and approved activities.

CMI's FY27 market-development investments are dedicated to the Tart Cherry Program.

How the Board Adds Value

The Board oversees CMI's market-development investments, evaluates program performance, and considers how its contributions advance the coordinated industry strategy.

2) Industry Intelligence

Why It Matters

Horticultural research addresses production challenges and supports the industry's future. MCC identifies the research needs and priorities of Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry; CMI funds that research through its Board-approved investments.

FY27 Focus

- Continue support for Michigan State University's tart cherry horticultural research.
- Support Michigan sweet cherry horticultural research.
- Define a multi-year tart cherry varietal innovation roadmap, evaluating potential traits, scientific feasibility, grower profitability, research gaps, partnerships, and future investment needs.

The varietal roadmap establishes a basis for future decisions. Tart and sweet cherry research investments remain dedicated to their respective programs.

How the Board Adds Value

The Board considers MCC-identified horticultural research priorities, approves CMI's investments, reviews progress and expected benefits, and evaluates recommendations for future funding.

3) Governance & Industry Stewardship

Why It Matters

Effective leadership, industry engagement, and coordination help turn strategy into results. CMI invests in the relationships, knowledge, and governance practices needed to support that work.

FY27 Focus

- Strengthen Board effectiveness through orientation, governance education, and leadership development.
- Support the Orchard & Vineyard Show and grower meetings.
- Continue crop-management support.
- Support communications related to the Michigan Cherry Committee referendum.

How the Board Adds Value

The Board guides CMI's participation, evaluates the value of these investments, and contributes actively to leadership development and industry engagement.

4) Organizational Operations & Infrastructure

Why It Matters

CMI needs the staff capacity, financial controls, systems, and professional support required to carry out its responsibilities. These investments support both the Tart and Sweet Cherry Programs.

FY27 Focus

- Maintain the operational capacity needed to implement Board-approved work.
- Support sound accounting, audit, administrative, and financial-management practices.
- Monitor spending, cash flow, reserves, and grant reimbursement timing.
- Maintain accountability for organizational and program performance.

How the Board Adds Value

The Board oversees financial performance, resource allocation, and organizational effectiveness while ensuring that CMI has the capacity to deliver its priorities.

FY27 Funding Principles

CMI's funding framework distinguishes between investments that benefit one commodity and those that benefit both:

- **Commodity-specific investments:** Tart Cherry Program resources support tart cherry activities, and Sweet Cherry Program resources support sweet cherry activities.
- **Shared investments:** FY27 investments benefiting both programs are allocated **70% to tart cherries and 30% to sweet cherries**, using CMI's established allocation methodology.

Restricted grant resources are managed according to their award requirements and approved purposes. These distinctions guide how the Board evaluates investments, allocates resources, and monitors results.

12. Your Commitment as a CMI Board Member

Serving on the Cherry Marketing Institute Board is both an honor and a responsibility.

Every Board member brings valuable experience and perspective. By preparing thoughtfully, participating actively, and acting in the best interests of CMI and its mission, each member contributes to stronger governance and better decisions.

The following commitments guide effective Board service.

Prepare Well

- Review meeting materials in advance.
- Come ready to ask questions and contribute.
- Stay informed about industry issues and CMI's priorities.

Participate Fully

- Attend and actively engage in Board meetings.
- Share your perspective while listening respectfully to others.
- Encourage constructive discussion and create space for every member to contribute.

Lead with Integrity

- Put CMI's mission and organizational interests ahead of personal or individual business interests.
- Disclose conflicts of interest before discussion and follow CMI's Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Respect confidential information in accordance with applicable policies and requirements.
- Follow CMI's governing documents, Board policies, and applicable legal and funding requirements.

Think Strategically

- Focus on the long-term success of CMI and the industries it serves.
- Serve as a positive ambassador for the organization.
- Support the Board's collective decisions and respect the responsibilities of staff leadership in carrying them out.

Closing Thought

CMI's strength comes from the collective leadership, experience, and commitment of those who serve. Thank you for investing your time, expertise, and perspective in advancing the future of U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.

13. Resources & Key Contacts

The following resources and contacts are available to support you in your role as a CMI Board member.

When in Doubt

If you have questions or need clarification on any topic, please reach out.

Staff leadership is here to support you and ensure you have the information needed to participate effectively.

CMI Staff Leadership

CMI operates with a lean team, and staff leadership serves as your primary resource for information, materials, and support.

- **Amy Cohn, President**
  - Primary point of contact for Board matters
  - Provides strategic guidance and recommendations
  - Leads execution of Board-approved initiatives
  - Serves as the bridge between Board direction and implementation
- **Michelle Wright, Administrative Manager**
  - Supports Board meetings and logistics
  - Manages operational execution and coordination
  - Provides data, materials, and follow-up support
  - Ensures day-to-day activities run smoothly

Board Expense Reimbursement

Contact Michelle Wright for CMI's current Board expense reimbursement guidelines, the Expense Report form, and instructions for completing and submitting the form.

Other Industry Organizations

These organizations also support the industry, each under its own independent authority:

- **Cherry Industry Administrative Board (CIAB)**
  - Administers Federal Marketing Order No. 930 under USDA oversight. The order regulates the handling of covered tart cherries grown in its defined seven-state production area.
- **Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC)**
  - Strengthens Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry through research, education, and strategic investments that support growers, processors, and the long-term vitality of the industry.

Industry Website

Visit the Industry section of USTartCherries.com for industry news, events, program information, and reference materials. Current Board listings are available on the About the Industry page.

Use these resources throughout your Board service to stay informed and find additional information.

Key Governance Resources

Board members may reference the following materials for additional detail:

- CMI Articles of Incorporation
- CMI By-Laws
- Code of Ethics
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Current CMI Board Roster
- FY27 U.S. Tart Cherries Strategy & Investment Plan
- FY27 CMI Strategic Budget Framework
- FY27 CMI Board-approved budget
- MAP & RAPP Program Information
- Travel and Business Expense Reimbursement Policy
- Expense Report form and submission instructions

For current copies of these materials, contact Michelle Wright.

14. Appendix & Reference Materials

The following materials support your understanding of CMI's governance, strategic priorities, financial stewardship, and Board responsibilities. Contact Michelle Wright for current copies.

Governance & Board Service

- CMI Articles of Incorporation
- CMI By-Laws
- Code of Ethics
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Current CMI Board Roster

These materials explain CMI's organizational structure, Board responsibilities, and expectations for ethical and effective service.

Strategy & Financial Stewardship

- FY27 U.S. Tart Cherries Strategy & Investment Plan
- FY27 CMI Strategic Budget Framework
- FY27 CMI Board-approved budget
- MAP & RAPP Program Information

These resources explain the coordinated industry strategy, CMI's investments, tart and sweet cherry funding principles, and requirements associated with grant-supported activities.

Board Expense Reimbursement

- Travel and Business Expense Reimbursement Policy
- Expense Report form and submission instructions

Review the current guidelines before making travel arrangements or incurring expenses on behalf of CMI. Contact Michelle Wright with questions about reimbursement procedures.

How to Use These Materials

Use these resources whenever you need additional detail about a Board matter, organizational policy, investment decision, or administrative requirement.

This handbook introduces Board service and summarizes CMI's governance practices. It does not amend or replace the Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, applicable requirements or Board-approved policies. If this handbook differs from those authorities, the applicable governing authority controls. Staff leadership can help you locate the appropriate resource and address questions.