Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC)

Board Orientation Handbook

October 2026

Table of Contents

1. Welcome & Purpose 4

2. How the Industry Works Together 5

3. What is the Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC)? 7

4. What is Michigan Public Act 232? 8

5. MCC's Core Responsibilities 10

6. What This Means for You as a Board Member 11

7. Governance Foundations 13

8. How We Work Together 15

9. Decision Authority & Accountability 17

10. Board Meetings: What to Expect 19

11. FY27 Strategic Priorities 22

12. Your Commitment as an MCC Board Member 26

13. Resources & Key Contacts 28

14. Appendix & Reference Materials 31

Overview & How to Use This Handbook

This Board Orientation Handbook is designed to provide a clear and practical overview of how the Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC) 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 MCC's role in Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry, explain the distinct responsibilities and geographic scope of CIAB, CMI, and MCC, and describe how CMI works with CIAB and MCC.
- **Sections 3–6:** Explain MCC's purpose, statutory 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, staff leadership is available to provide support.

1. Welcome & Purpose

Whether you are joining the Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC) Board for the first time or continuing your service, your leadership helps shape the future of Michigan's cherry industry.

Established under Michigan Public Act 232, the Michigan Cherry Committee administers the Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program and stewards grower assessment dollars to strengthen Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry.

MCC identifies the horticultural research needs and priorities of Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry. It also strengthens industry knowledge and education, supports grower and community engagement, develops effective governance and industry leadership, and builds strategic Michigan partnerships.

MCC operates within a broader system of cherry industry organizations. The Cherry Industry Administrative Board (CIAB) administers Federal Marketing Order No. 930 under USDA oversight. The Cherry Marketing Institute (CMI) builds demand and expands market opportunities for U.S.-grown Montmorency tart cherries and Michigan sweet cherries.

MCC's responsibilities encompass both tart and sweet cherries produced in Michigan. MCC works with CMI, while each Board retains independent decision-making authority. Activities may align with other industry organizations within each organization's responsibilities. Through its Michigan-focused work, MCC contributes to 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.

Tart and Sweet Cherry Responsibilities

Tart cherries are the primary focus of our shared industry work because that work spans seven producing states: Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin. CMI and MCC also serve sweet cherries, with those responsibilities limited to Michigan. This difference in scope is why we refer to the broader effort as the U.S. tart cherry industry.

MCC's own responsibilities remain Michigan-focused for both tart and sweet cherries. CIAB's regulatory scope is defined by the varieties, production area, and activities covered by Federal Marketing Order No. 930; it extends beyond Montmorency. CMI's tart cherry market-development focus is U.S.-grown Montmorency.

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.

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.

The following infographic provides a shared reference for the three organizations. Sections 3–10 explain the authority and procedures specific to MCC.

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 Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC)?

The Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC) administers the Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program, established in 1972 under the Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act, 1965 PA 232. The program supports Michigan cherry growers through collective investment in authorized research, promotion, market information, and market development.

The program covers Michigan red tart and sweet cherries produced for processing, as defined in its governing document. MCC's Michigan focus differs from CIAB's federal marketing order responsibilities and CMI's market-development role. MCC's work with CMI supports aligned work while preserving each Board's independent authority.

Within the program's authority and approved budgets, MCC's work includes:

- Research and production support
- Grower engagement and industry coordination
- Education and outreach
- Market support activities
- Data collection and industry information
- Strategic investments that strengthen the long-term competitiveness of Michigan's cherry industry

MCC works with CIAB, CMI, Michigan State University, Project GREEEN, MDARD, and other industry partners to advance initiatives that benefit Michigan growers and contribute to broader industry goals.

As production conditions, research opportunities, market dynamics, and grower needs continue to evolve, strategic leadership becomes increasingly important. MCC exists to help the industry respond to those changes by investing in initiatives that strengthen Michigan's cherry industry today while supporting its long-term success for generations to come.

Reference: Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program, Purposes, Definitions, and Provisions and Regulations.

4. What is Michigan Public Act 232?

Why It Matters

Michigan Public Act 232—the Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act, 1965 PA 232—provides the statutory framework for producer-supported commodity programs. The Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program establishes MCC and sets out the rules for its work.

Read the Act and the program together. They define the covered commodity, assessments, Committee membership, authorized activities, and procedures for administering the program.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) provides legal, fiscal, and program oversight. Board decisions must remain within the Act, the program, applicable Michigan law, and MDARD requirements.

Key Characteristics

The Act and Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program provide a framework to:

- Collect producer assessments and use those funds for authorized program purposes.
- Support authorized research, promotion, market information, and market development.
- Operate under MDARD oversight, including budget, financial reporting, and audit requirements.
- Serve Michigan's tart and sweet cherry growers within the program's scope.

Financial Oversight

The Committee prepares its budget and submits it to the MDARD Director with supporting information. Budget amendments and reserve arrangements must follow the program and applicable MDARD approval requirements. The program also requires an audit at least once each fiscal period and financial records available for review.

The Board reviews financial reports, budget performance, audit findings, and the use of reserves. Restricted grant funds must be tracked and used according to their award terms and authorized purposes.

What This Means for the Board

As an MCC Board member, you are responsible for ensuring that the Committee:

- Operates within the Act, the program, applicable law, and MDARD requirements.
- Invests grower assessment dollars responsibly and strategically.
- Maintains transparency, accountability, and sound financial stewardship.
- Complies with applicable requirements established under Michigan law and MDARD oversight.
- Advances initiatives that strengthen the long-term success of Michigan's cherry industry.

Grower Referendums and Program Continuation

Continuation of the program is submitted to eligible growers through an MDARD-administered referendum every five years. The March 7, 2022 continuation order extends the program from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2027. Staff and MDARD are the sources for the next referendum's official schedule, eligibility, and voting instructions.

A Board vote alone does not amend an assessment requirement or replace a grower referendum. Proposed program changes must follow the statutory and MDARD process.

Public Accountability

MCC is subject to Michigan's Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act. Members should understand the public nature of Board business and the procedures for meetings, records, and legally confidential information. Section 10 explains the practical implications for Board participation.

References: Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program, Duties, Assessments, Budget, and Accounting; MDARD Opinion and Order, March 7, 2022.

MDARD commodity organization oversight

5. MCC’s Core Responsibilities

The Michigan Cherry Committee exists to strengthen Michigan's cherry industry through responsible stewardship of grower assessment dollars and strategic investments that improve the industry's long-term competitiveness.

Regardless of changing budgets, programs, or strategic priorities, these three responsibilities define the enduring work of MCC.

1. Industry Intelligence

MCC identifies the horticultural research needs and priorities of Michigan’s tart and sweet cherry industry and supports education and industry knowledge that improve decision-making and competitiveness.

CMI funds that horticultural research through its Board-approved investments. Working with CMI, Michigan State University, Project GREEEN, researchers, and other partners, MCC connects grower needs with research and helps make the findings useful to the industry.

2. Strategic Partnerships

MCC works collaboratively with growers, processors, researchers, universities, policymakers, commodity organizations, and industry partners to strengthen Michigan's cherry industry and advance shared priorities.

These partnerships strengthen communication, research coordination, education, and relationships that support Michigan’s cherry industry. Activities must remain within MCC’s authorized purposes.

3. Governance

The Board provides strategic leadership and responsible stewardship of Michigan grower assessment dollars.

The Board establishes strategic priorities, approves budget and investment recommendations, provides oversight, and ensures MCC fulfills its responsibilities under the Act and program, subject to applicable MDARD requirements.

Industry Intelligence, Strategic Partnerships, and Governance provide the foundation for MCC’s work. Section 11 explains how the FY27 priorities focus these responsibilities for the year.

6. What This Means for You as a Board Member

Serving on the Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC) Board is both an honor and a responsibility. Board members are entrusted by Michigan's cherry growers to provide strategic leadership, exercise responsible stewardship of grower assessment dollars, and help strengthen the long-term success of Michigan's cherry industry.

The Board establishes strategic direction, approves budget and investment recommendations, provides oversight, and ensures that MCC fulfills its responsibilities under the Act and program. Staff leadership manages day-to-day operations within approved policies and delegated authority.

Your primary responsibilities include:

- Think Strategically – Focus on the long-term success of Michigan's cherry industry rather than day-to-day operational decisions.
- Exercise Sound Judgment – Bring your grower and regional perspective while considering the interests of Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry as a whole.
- Provide Oversight – Review organizational performance, financial stewardship, and strategic progress while empowering staff leadership to manage day-to-day operations.
- Act as a Responsible Steward – Ensure grower assessment dollars are invested responsibly, transparently, and in ways that provide long-term value to Michigan's cherry industry.
- Operate Within Your Authority – Ensure decisions are consistent with the Act, the program, applicable law, and MDARD requirements.

No single Board member is expected to have all the answers. Effective governance depends on thoughtful discussion, diverse perspectives, and a shared commitment to advancing the long-term interests of Michigan's cherry industry.

Board Structure and Service

The program provides for nine voting producer members: seven representing tart cherries and two representing sweet cherries. Seats are allocated across three Michigan districts:

- **District 1:** Three tart cherry producers and one sweet cherry producer.
- **District 2:** Two tart cherry producers and one sweet cherry producer.
- **District 3:** Two tart cherry producers.

Selection and Terms

The Governor appoints members through the program's nomination process. Regular terms are three years, with members continuing until their successors are appointed and qualified. Vacancies are filled through the prescribed process for the unexpired term. Contact staff for nomination information and the current roster.

Officers and Ex Officio Members

The Committee organizes annually to select a Chair and other necessary officers. The program provides for the MDARD Director and the director of the Agricultural Experiment Station to serve as nonvoting ex officio members. Consult the current roster for officers, representatives, and terms.

Subcommittees support assigned work within documented authority. They do not automatically have the full Committee's decision-making powers. Individual members likewise act for MCC only when authorized.

Reference: Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program, Membership, Terms of Office, Selection, Vacancies, and Duties.

7. Governance Foundations

Strong governance is essential to the long-term success of the Michigan Cherry Committee and the Michigan cherry industry it serves. While Board members bring diverse experiences and perspectives, effective governance is built on a shared understanding of the Board's role, responsibilities, and guiding principles.

The following governance foundations help ensure the Board remains focused on providing strategic leadership, responsible stewardship, and effective oversight on behalf of Michigan's cherry growers.

Think Strategically

The Board's primary responsibility is to look beyond today's issues and help position Michigan's cherry industry for long-term success.

Effective governance requires Board members to:

- Focus on long-term outcomes rather than short-term challenges.
- Consider the broader interests of Michigan's cherry industry when making decisions.
- Evaluate opportunities based on strategic impact rather than individual preferences.
- Balance immediate needs with long-term priorities.

Govern Through Policy & Strategy

The Board governs through strategic direction, policies, budget and investment decisions, and oversight. Staff leadership manages day-to-day operations within approved authority.

Effective governance requires Board members to:

- Establish strategic priorities.
- Approve budgets and major initiatives, subject to applicable MDARD requirements.
- Monitor organizational performance and financial stewardship.
- Provide oversight while empowering staff leadership to manage daily operations within approved budgets, policies, and delegated authority.

Exercise Fiduciary Responsibility

Board members are responsible for ensuring that grower assessment dollars are invested responsibly and in ways that advance the long-term interests of Michigan's cherry industry.

Effective governance requires Board members to:

- Exercise sound financial judgment.
- Evaluate investments carefully.
- Ensure transparency and accountability.
- Act in the best interests of the industry as a whole.

Operate Within Your Authority

MCC's authority comes from the Act and the Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program. Board-approved policies and delegations operate within those authorities and applicable MDARD requirements.

Effective governance requires Board members to:

- Understand the Board's statutory authority and responsibilities.
- Ensure decisions are consistent with the Act, the program, and applicable requirements.
- Respect the distinction between governance and management.
- Recognize that individual Board members do not independently direct staff, commit MCC funds, or speak for the organization without authorization.

Conflicts of Interest and Responsible Conduct

Disclose actual or potential conflicts before discussion and follow MCC's Conflict of Interest Policy and applicable legal requirements for participation, recusal, and voting. Bring your business and regional experience to the discussion while evaluating decisions in the interests of the Michigan industry MCC serves.

Protect legally confidential information and use organizational information responsibly. When uncertain about a disclosure or proposed action, ask the Chair and staff leadership to identify the applicable requirement before proceeding.

8. How We Work Together

Strong governance depends on clear roles and productive working relationships.

Effective Board service is built on trust, open communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to advancing the best interests of Michigan's cherry industry.

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

Board

The Board provides governance by:

- Setting strategic direction and priorities.
- Approving budgets and major initiatives, subject to applicable MDARD requirements.
- Evaluating and guiding key organizational decisions.
- Providing oversight and accountability.

Staff Leadership

Staff leadership is responsible for:

- Implementing the Board's strategic direction.
- Managing day-to-day operations within approved budgets, policies, internal controls, and delegated authority.
- Advising the Board on emerging issues and opportunities.
- Executing Board-approved programs and initiatives.

Where the Board Adds the Most Value

The Board adds the greatest value when it:

- Focuses on long-term strategy.
- Asks thoughtful questions.
- Brings diverse perspectives to discussions.
- Exercises sound judgment.
- Supports staff leadership through informed oversight and clear direction.

Shared Behaviors

Our shared behaviors help make collaboration productive while respecting each organization's responsibilities:

- **Educate:** Share knowledge, ask questions, and help others understand the issues.
- **Innovate:** Explore practical ideas and evaluate them against evidence, resources, and authorized purposes.
- **Advocate:** Explain industry needs accurately and contribute an informed voice within MCC's authority. This behavior does not itself authorize lobbying.
- **Collaborate:** Listen to different perspectives and work constructively with growers, staff, and partners.

Meeting Expectations

Board meetings are most effective when every member:

- Arrives prepared and engaged.
- Participates in thoughtful discussion.
- Listens respectfully to different perspectives.
- Asks questions to improve understanding.
- Focuses on the long-term interests of Michigan's cherry industry.

Clear roles and respectful communication allow the Board to provide effective oversight while staff leadership implements approved work.

9. Decision Authority & Accountability

Effective governance depends on clear decision authority. Board, staff, and MDARD responsibilities must be understood together so that decisions follow the correct process and grower assessment dollars are used appropriately.

Decision Ownership

Board Governs

The Board establishes MCC's direction and provides oversight of:

- Strategic priorities
- Annual budgets, major investments, and any required MDARD submissions
- Significant programs and initiatives
- Organizational policies
- Compliance with the Act, the program, and applicable MDARD requirements
- Financial stewardship and organizational performance

Staff Leadership Leads

Staff leadership is responsible for executing the Board's direction by:

- Implementing Board-approved initiatives
- Managing operations within approved budgets, policies, and delegated authority
- Developing strategic recommendations for Board consideration
- Managing consultants, vendors, and external partnerships
- Monitoring program performance
- Reporting organizational progress and emerging opportunities to the Board

Specific spending and contracting authority must be established through the governing documents, approved policies, and documented delegations. An approved budget does not by itself give every member or staff person authority to commit funds.

Committee Authority

The Board may assign focused review, fact-finding, or recommendations to subcommittees. The assignment should state the purpose, reporting expectations, and any delegated authority. A committee recommendation becomes an MCC commitment only through the required approval process.

MDARD and Statutory Procedures

Program amendments, assessments, budget actions, reserve arrangements, and referendums must follow the Act, program, and applicable MDARD requirements. Staff coordinates submissions and implementation after the required approvals or procedures.

How the Board Makes Decisions

Every significant recommendation presented to the Board should support MCC's long-term strategic direction.

As Board members evaluate investments, programs, and opportunities, they should continually ask:

- Does this advance one or more of MCC's strategic priorities?
- Does it strengthen Michigan's long-term competitiveness?
- Is it an appropriate and responsible use of grower assessment dollars?
- Is it consistent with the Act, the program, and applicable requirements?
- Will this create meaningful value for Michigan's cherry industry?

By filtering decisions through these questions, the Board helps ensure that limited resources are invested where they will have the greatest long-term impact.

A Practical Way to Think About Decision-Making

Use the governing documents and documented delegations to identify the decision-maker:

- **Board:** Strategic direction, priorities, budgets, major investments, policies, and oversight within MCC’s authority.
- **Staff Leadership:** Day-to-day implementation within approved budgets, policies, internal controls, and delegated authority.
- **MDARD or statutory process:** Actions for which the Act or program requires external approval, formal amendment, or a grower referendum.

10. Board Meetings: What to Expect

Board meetings are where governance becomes action. They provide the opportunity for Board members to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities, establish strategic direction, and make informed decisions on behalf of Michigan's cherry industry.

Our Meeting Philosophy

Read routine updates before the meeting so discussion can focus on strategy, decisions, and oversight.

Before the Meeting

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.

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.
- Respect differing viewpoints while working toward sound decisions.
- Support a culture of professionalism, trust, and collaboration.

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.

Financial Statements

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

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 generally limited unless clarification is requested by a Board member.

Discussion

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

Discussion & Board Action

Items requiring formal Board consideration, discussion, and a motion and vote.

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

Taking Board Action

Board members should understand basic parliamentary procedures and MCC's quorum and voting requirements. A member states a motion, another seconds it when required by MCC's applicable meeting procedures, the Board discusses it, and the Chair calls for a vote. Before voting, clarify the proposed action, funding responsibility, and any required MDARD approval. Staff records the decision and follows up on assigned actions.

- **Quorum:** The program requires a simple majority of voting members to constitute a quorum.
- **Voting:** The program requires a simple majority of concurring votes to pass a motion or approve Committee action. The Chair and staff should confirm the applicable threshold before a vote.
- **Participation:** The program states that votes at assembled meetings are cast in person. Follow current law and MDARD guidance for any legally permitted exception.
- **Ex officio members:** Nonvoting members do not vote or count toward the voting-member quorum.

Disclose conflicts before discussion and voting, and follow MCC's Conflict of Interest Policy and applicable participation and recusal requirements. Staff can help document the action and confirm that any required approval is obtained.

Reference: Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program, Membership and Procedure.

Public Meetings and Records

MCC meetings require public notice, public access, and an opportunity for public comment under the applicable rules. Decisions must be made in an open meeting. Closed sessions are permitted only for a lawful purpose and through the required procedure; decisions return to open session.

Do not use email polls, texts, or a series of private conversations to substitute for public deliberation and action. Physical attendance is generally required. Ask staff and MDARD about a legally permitted exception or required disability accommodation before relying on remote participation for voting or quorum.

Minutes document attendance, decisions, and votes and must be maintained and made available as required by law. Contact staff promptly if you identify an error. The Chair and staff can help members follow the meeting process.

Michigan Attorney General Open Meetings Act Handbook, March 2026

MCC records may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Preserve Board-related records according to applicable requirements, protect legally exempt information, and promptly direct records requests to staff for the proper response process.

Michigan Attorney General Freedom of Information Act Handbook

Strategic Questions

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

- Does this support MCC's strategic priorities?
- Will this help improve grower profitability and strengthen the long-term viability of Michigan’s cherry industry?
- Is this an appropriate use of grower assessment dollars?
- Is it consistent with the Act, the program, and applicable requirements?
- What long-term impact will this decision have?
- Is MCC the right organization to lead or fund this work?

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

11. FY27 Strategic Priorities

The Michigan Cherry Committee exists to provide Michigan-focused leadership and steward grower assessment dollars in ways that strengthen the long-term success of Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry.

The FY27 Strategic Budget Framework organizes MCC's work around three priorities. Use it with the FY27 budget and applicable approvals to understand what MCC is investing in, why the work matters, and how results will be evaluated.

These priorities focus MCC's work for the year. They do not expand its statutory authority or replace the approval requirements described earlier in this handbook.

Advance Research & Industry Knowledge

Michigan's competitiveness depends on research that addresses grower needs and on education that makes useful knowledge available to the industry.

FY27 Focus

- Use the MCC FY27 Horticultural Research Agenda to identify and communicate the research needs and priorities of Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry.
- Strengthen connections among growers, researchers, Michigan State University, Project GREEEN, and industry partners.
- Support practical education and industry knowledge through the Tree Fruit Integrator and the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable & Farm Market EXPO.

How the Board Adds Value

Identify and prioritize Michigan growers' horticultural research needs, communicate those priorities to CMI and research partners, and review progress and practical benefits. CMI funds the research through its Board-approved investments.

FY27 Horticultural Research Agenda

The agenda focuses on three research priorities for Michigan's tart and sweet cherry industry:

Protect Crop Health & Market Access

Improve pest and disease management, including spotted wing drosophila, resistance management, and approaches that support compliance with maximum residue limits in relevant markets.

Reduce Weather-Driven Crop Loss

Strengthen monitoring and production practices that address frost, bloom timing, drought, winter injury, and irrigation needs.

Build Future-Ready Varieties & Orchard Systems

Advance resilient varieties, rootstocks, soil health, and orchard systems that improve crop reliability, fruit quality, and long-term production performance.

Near-, mid-, and long-term work proceeds together. The horizons describe when benefits may be realized, rather than a sequence in which each area must wait for the previous one to finish.

Research Coordination and Funding

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. MCC and CMI work with researchers and industry partners to connect grower needs with research and communicate results. Communications must accurately reflect the science and comply with requirements applicable to MCC's activities.

The FY27 framework places this horticultural research funding in CMI's budget and MCC's education and engagement investments in MCC's budget. Each Board independently determines its organization's actions and remains responsible for its approvals, agreements, and oversight. Alignment does not transfer authority or funding responsibility between organizations. Any restricted grant administered by MCC must follow its award conditions.

Reference: MCC FY27 Horticultural Research Agenda, September 2026; MCC FY27 Strategic Budget Framework, September 2026.

Strengthen Grower, Industry & Community Engagement

Michigan's cherry industry benefits from informed growers, connected partners, and communities that understand the industry's contribution to the state.

FY27 Focus

- Strengthen grower and industry relationships through communication, education, and opportunities for engagement.
- Support the National Cherry Festival's connection with Michigan's cherry industry and its communities.
- Evaluate participation and value so community-facing work supports meaningful industry outcomes.

How the Board Adds Value

Bring regional and grower perspectives, identify ways to improve participation, and evaluate whether engagement investments provide value to Michigan growers.

Support Leadership & Michigan Partnerships

MCC's work depends on informed Board members, capable leaders, and relationships that help Michigan partners understand grower needs.

FY27 Focus

- Connect Board orientation, governance education, and leadership development, including the November 2026 leadership summit.
- Strengthen Michigan relationships and awareness through the Government & Strategic Partnerships Advisor and Michigan Cherry Capitol Day.
- Improve the information available to MCC about state government, agencies, regulatory developments, and funding opportunities.

The FY27 advisor engagement is limited to information, education, relationship development, and strategic advice. It does not include lobbying services. Proposed activities must remain within MCC's authority and the approved scope of work.

How the Board Adds Value

Participate in Board development and evaluate the value of partnerships. Consider industry recognition, including Cherry Industry Awards, within the relevant approved plan and budget.

How the FY27 Framework Guides Investment

Strategic priorities guide the investment framework and annual budget. Programs are funded to advance those priorities. The Board then reviews progress and results to determine whether the work continues to provide value to Michigan growers.

- **Purpose:** Which FY27 priority and authorized program purpose does this advance?
- **Resources:** What funding is available, including any proposed reserve use, and what approvals are required?
- **Responsibility:** Which organization approves, funds, and carries out the work?
- **Results:** What benefit is expected, when should it be visible, and how will progress be reported?

Audit, accounting, and financial administration support all three priorities. They provide the records and controls needed for responsible stewardship and reliable Board oversight.

Use the current FY27 budget and MDARD approvals for spending decisions. A strategic framework describes direction; it does not independently authorize an expenditure or change a funding restriction.

References: MCC FY27 Strategic Budget Framework, September 2026; MCC FY27 Horticultural Research Agenda; MCC FY27 Government & Strategic Partnerships Advisor Brief; FY27 MCC budget and applicable MDARD approvals.

12. Your Commitment as an MCC Board Member

Michigan cherry growers have entrusted the Board with the responsibility of investing their assessment dollars wisely, providing thoughtful strategic leadership, and strengthening the long-term success of Michigan's cherry industry.

The following commitments reflect the expectations of every MCC Board member.

Think Strategically

As a Board member, your role is to provide strategic direction and oversight.

Focus on the long-term success of Michigan's cherry industry by:

- Evaluating opportunities through MCC's strategic priorities.
- Considering long-term outcomes rather than short-term challenges.
- Supporting investments that create meaningful value for Michigan growers.
- Looking beyond individual interests to what best serves the industry as a whole.

Prepare Well

Board members are expected to:

- Review Board packets and pre-read materials before each meeting.
- Come prepared to ask thoughtful questions.
- Stay informed about emerging industry issues and opportunities.
- Use meeting time for discussion rather than information gathering.

Participate Thoughtfully

You are encouraged to:

- Share your perspective and industry experience.
- Listen respectfully to different viewpoints.
- Ask questions that improve understanding and decision-making.
- Engage in constructive dialogue that strengthens Board decisions.

Be a Responsible Steward

Board members have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure Michigan grower assessment dollars are invested wisely.

This means:

- Making decisions that provide long-term value.
- Exercising sound financial judgment.
- Ensuring transparency and accountability.
- Evaluating every significant investment through MCC's strategic priorities.

Lead with Integrity

Board members represent more than themselves—they represent Michigan's cherry industry.

Every Board member is expected to:

- Act in the best interests of Michigan's cherry industry.
- Disclose actual or potential conflicts before discussion and follow MCC’s Conflict of Interest Policy and applicable participation, recusal, and voting requirements.
- Protect information that is legally confidential while meeting applicable public-records and disclosure requirements.
- Represent Board decisions accurately and support their implementation.
- Demonstrate professionalism, respect, and integrity in every interaction.

Be an Ambassador for Michigan's Cherry Industry

Board members play an important role in strengthening relationships across the industry by:

- Encouraging collaboration.
- Supporting industry partners.
- Share accurate information that reflects the evidence and MCC’s authorized role.
- Promoting confidence in the work of the Michigan Cherry Committee.

Thank you for your willingness to invest your time, experience, and leadership in advancing the long-term interests of Michigan's cherry industry.

13. Resources & Key Contacts

Staff leadership can help with Board materials, finances, research, industry programs, and meeting logistics throughout your service.

MCC Staff Leadership

Amy Cohn, Executive Director

Amy serves as the Committee's chief executive and strategic advisor to the Board.

Primary responsibilities include:

- Serves as the Board's primary point of contact.
- Develops strategic recommendations for Board consideration.
- Leads implementation of Board-approved initiatives.
- Provides organizational leadership and strategic direction.
- Represents MCC with industry partners, government agencies, and external stakeholders.

Michelle Wright, Administrative Manager

Michelle supports the Board by coordinating the operational and administrative functions that keep the organization running effectively.

Primary responsibilities include:

- Coordinates Board meetings and meeting logistics.
- Prepares Board materials and meeting documentation.
- Manages financial administration and operational coordination.
- Supports implementation of Board-approved initiatives.
- Serves as a resource for Board communications, records, and follow-up.

Board Expense Reimbursement

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

Industry and Oversight Resources

The following organizations support Michigan's cherry industry and, where applicable, the broader U.S. tart cherry industry. Each operates under its own authority and responsibilities.

Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD)

Provides statutory oversight of the Michigan Cherry Committee under Michigan Public Act 232.

Michigan State University

Research partner supporting production, pest management, horticulture, economics, and other priorities that strengthen Michigan's cherry industry.

Project GREEEN

Supports competitive research investments that improve the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of Michigan agriculture.

Cherry Industry Administrative Board (CIAB)

Administers Federal Marketing Order No. 930 under USDA oversight. The order regulates the handling of covered tart cherries grown within its defined seven-state production area.

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. CMI works with MCC; each Board retains independent decision-making authority.

Key Governance Resources

Board members may reference the following materials throughout their service:

- Michigan Public Act 232
- Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program and current orders
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- FY27 MCC budget and applicable MDARD approvals
- MCC FY27 Strategic Budget Framework
- MCC FY27 Horticultural Research Agenda
- Board Meeting Materials
- Financial Reports
- Annual Board Calendar

For current copies of these materials, contact Michelle Wright.

Industry Website

Use the Industry section of the U.S. Tart Cherries website for organizational information, Board listings, meeting notices, and industry resources. Staff can confirm appointments, terms, and the latest official roster.

About the Industry and Board listings

For a governance or authority question, Amy and Michelle can help identify the governing document and coordinate with MDARD. For meeting logistics, records, or reimbursement instructions, contact Michelle.

14. Appendix & Reference Materials

This handbook is designed to provide a practical overview of the Michigan Cherry Committee and your role as a Board member. Throughout your service, there may be times when you need additional information or wish to reference the governing documents that guide the Committee's work.

The materials listed below support your understanding of MCC's governance, statutory authority, strategic direction, and financial stewardship. For current copies of these resources, contact Michelle Wright.

Governance & Legal Documents

- Michigan Public Act 232
- Michigan Cherry Promotion and Development Program and current orders
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Michigan Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act guidance
- Current MCC procedures, committee assignments, and documented delegations

Strategic Planning & Investment

- MCC FY27 Strategic Budget Framework
- MCC FY27 Horticultural Research Agenda
- MCC FY27 Government & Strategic Partnerships Advisor Brief
- FY27 U.S. Tart Cherries Strategy & Investment Plan, for shared industry context

Financial & Administrative Resources

- Current Financial Reports
- FY27 MCC budget and applicable MDARD approvals
- Assessment Information
- Reserve policies and any required MDARD approvals
- Current Board expense reimbursement guidelines
- Expense Report form and submission instructions

Board Resources

- Board Meeting Calendar
- Current Board Roster
- Committee Officers
- Board Orientation Materials
- Parliamentary procedure reference, subject to MCC’s governing documents and Michigan law

Industry Reference Materials

- Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) Information
- Michigan State University & Project GREEEN Resources

Using These Resources

This handbook introduces Board service. If a summary differs from the Act, the program, applicable law, MDARD requirements, or Board-approved policies, those governing authorities control.

Staff can help you locate the current version of each reference and determine which requirements apply to a particular question. The documents listed here are maintained separately from this handbook.

Thank you for serving Michigan's cherry growers. The decisions you make today will help shape the future of Michigan's cherry industry for generations to come.