

# **INTERNATIONAL CAKE EXPLORATION SOCIETE**

## **BUSINESS PLAN      2018**

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# Executive Summary

International Cake Exploration Societe (ICES) has been in existence for over 42 years. The organization was founded to bring sugar artists together to learn from each other and share their love of the sugar arts. A truly international organization, there are members in over 35 countries around the globe. The organization offers many opportunities for learning and imparting techniques in the sugar arts through local, regional and international events, as well as, scholarships and other educational programs. The mission of the organization is to preserve, advance and encourage exploration of the sugar arts. ICES has promoted and provided opportunities for continuing education, development of future sugar artists, and enjoyment of the art form in a caring and sharing environment. The annual Convention and Show consists of meetings for the Board of Directors, Representatives, and the annual General Membership Meeting. There are also demonstrations, hands on classes, social events, and other educational opportunities. While there has been a growth within the cake decorating and sugar arts community, ICES has seen a decline in the membership; some loss can be equated to attrition. The goal of this business plan is to increase and retain membership, and also to update the organization's image, modernize and streamline.

The organization's membership consists of members from around the world. The members are various skill levels from novices and experienced cake and/or sugar artists. There are many talented and recognized cake and sugar artists from every corner of the globe.

ICES has provided services for its membership. These services include education, certification, scholarships, judging programs and events. All the states, areas, provinces, chapters & countries (S/A/P/C/C), within the US and around the world, provide events for their membership and other interested sugar artists, to include educational and informative classes.

The management team is comprised of volunteers. The ICES Board of Directors is elected by the membership. The other management personnel, Show Directors, Instructors, and Committee members are also volunteers and some are selected for certain positions. The organization also has a few paid contractors.

The majority of the financial income is derived from the membership dues and the annual Convention and Show. With the decrease in membership and Convention

attendance, the finances must be monitored closely. As a 501(c) (6) not-for-profit organization, there are limitations for raising additional funds.

ICES is a unique organization and was created for the love of the sugar arts. Its members are the heart and soul of the organization and with their support it can survive the changes in the sugar art world. Over the next three years, the Board of Directors are committed to make the necessary changes and remain fiscally responsive to ensure the organization continues to provide for its members and promote all the sugar arts.

## **2. Market Analysis:**

The membership of ICES is made up of US and International sugar artists, cake decorators, teachers, home-based business, and store owners. The membership can be classified into four categories. The first category is the new members. These members are new to cake decorating and the sugar arts. They are interested in the art, the business and are very excited to learn more of the art. Another part of this category is the skilled sugar artists looking for other opportunities and skills. The second category is current members, who have been with the organization for about 1-4 years. They are looking for their “niche” in the business and organization. They are questioning the organization and looking at the benefits and what they can gain from its association. They are also interested in new trends. The third category is long term members, who have been with the organization from 4-20 years. They are various levels of sugar artists. They continue to improve their skills and build their businesses and network. Most of the members understand the mission and enjoy the caring and sharing of the organization. The fourth category is the lifetime members, who have been with the organization for 20 years or more. They are experienced sugar artists, focused on the caring and sharing that the organization was founded on and promoting all forms of sugar art. They have long friendships and networks within the organization with other artists.

Membership is the heart of the organization. Retaining and increasing the membership is a top priority for the organization. Retaining members is a challenge with the current social media and accessibility to on-line training programs. The organization must focus on the current needs of the members, trends in the sugar art world and networking to promote the organization. Popular decorators and instructors can promote the organization with their apparel (pins and patches on their chef coats) and on their social media and in classes. Social media is one unique opportunity to keep the members up-to-date in the sugar world. To increase the membership, the organization must focus on the following groups: students (high schools and culinary art schools/programs), home-based sugar artists, cake show competitors, and notable sugar artists. Recruiting new members at the Convention and other shows is another option. Another part of the recruitment is rebranding the organization. For a number of years, the organization has been viewed as out-of-date and not in touch with the current sugar world environment. To help with recruitment, the organization needs an updated look on

its website and social media. A more active social media presence will also assist with the rebranding.

The Convention attendees consist of a variety of members and new members, who are exploring and considering the organization. The public is also invited to attend the convention to view the displays. A large portion of the Convention is the Vendor room for the attendees to shop. The vendors have been members-owned businesses, sugar art suppliers and other businesses that can provide different tools of the trade. The decline in Convention attendance has also led to decline in the number of vendors.

As for ICES competitors, there are only a few organizations for our type of member. One example is the Retail Bakers of America (RBA). The Retail Bakers of America is a not-for-profit trade organization committed to the success of the retail baking industry. It also provides educational and certification opportunities at a higher cost. There are also local cake clubs and organizations that bring local members together for local networking. Other Conventions, such as, The Americas Cake Fair by Satin Ice and South Florida Cake and Candy (SoFlo) are profit-based; however, they do provide demonstrations and training opportunities at different costs.

As for other competition for services, some members may choose on-line tutorials and monthly subscriptions to videos. Social media updates and Instagram access are very popular with younger sugar artists. These options also provide immediate access and more up-to-date information and latest trends. They also have a younger look. ICES has local chapters and group that provide face-to-face training classes in a “caring and sharing” atmosphere, and lower cost events. ICES has also provided scholarships, certification and judging programs for its members.

With market analysis, ICES needs to understand their membership and their needs. They are the foundation of ICES’ income. Understanding the membership and how to increase recruitment will improve the relationships with members and establish a firm foundation for the future of the organization.

Who can be targeted for contributions and sponsorship? List the specific strategies the organization will use to reach its members and elicit more donations.

The organization needs a wider online face, many do not know about the organization even within the industry. Here are some questions to be addressed:

- How do we get the word out?

- Who are we targeting?
- Should we target more than one group?
- How do we attract the “known” decorators/teachers?
- How do we retain them? – this is who we need to promote our organization
  - Wear pins/patches on all aprons/chef’s coats
    - BOD pins
      - Approved teacher
      - ICJ
      - ICES patch, or pin
      - Anything that may have people asking about it.
  - Logo on websites & online classes
    - Reciprocal links “I’ll be teaching at...DOS, Convention”
    - Online tutorials
    - Book launches
    - Blogs
    - Etc.
  - Mention International Cake Exploration Societe during
    - Interviews
    - Book launches
    - Blogs
    - Etc.
- How do we keep ourselves “Fresh”?
  - Ways to make exciting for multiple age levels
- Develop an eye catching promotional flyer that can be shared with schools, cake clubs, etc.
  - Update annually
  - Create an email list to send out to
  - Encourage recipients to share
  - Focus on learning
  - Keep upbeat & fresh
  - Need to change image from old ladies to “New and innovative
- Partner with new and upcoming sugar artists, who is the face of ICES?

### **3. Services**

ICES has provided the following services and great opportunities to its membership. Through these opportunities, the members can continue to give back and share with the organization.

- Every year scholarships are given out for all ages.
- Offer a variety of classes for cake artists, certification and judging, and cake challenges.
- Each member can elect to receive a digital newsletter that can be printed for their use.
- In the US, many state chapters provide members the opportunity to continue to share within their own states with Day of Sharing.
- Members can submit articles for the newsletter to be published.
- Members' cakes can be photographed and published in the newsletters.
- Opportunity to take an 8-hour artist certification exam to become a Certified Sugar Artist for the organization.
- Become an approved ICES instructor during convention or even in your state or country.
- Become a Representative or Ambassador for your chapter or country.
- Advance your care and appreciation for the organization and become a member on the Board of Directors.

ICES is an organization that provides the opportunity for members and non-members to take cake decoration classes at a reasonable price with teachers that are known worldwide and learn their techniques and talents. The membership is a group of designers whom love to share their talents. These opportunities give the attendees the opportunity to talk with other designers and share our own talents with each other. It becomes a family of shared interests.

As stated in the market analysis, understanding our membership, vendors, and other supporters will help the organization appreciate them and support their loyalty. This also includes the organization's competitors, various cake shows and clubs growing around the country. The organization needs to find out what brings people to attend the events, what they offer and build a stronger organization from

this information. Using this information will help the organization grow stronger by providing better services to the membership.

The organization needs to become more visible in social media; this will enable the cake and sugar community to see who the organization is and what it can offer that is quite different from any of the other shows or organizations in the market. The organization needs to attract younger decorators, students, home bakers and cake show competitors; they are the future. The organization's website needs to be updated and have a corporate look. The organization needs to streamline the forms; make them faster and easier to complete.

One area that needs more attention is the basics of decorating. One technique, fondant, has taken over and many have forgotten that cake decorating has been around a long time and those older techniques are getting lost. Some emphasis should be placed on the basics. This will allow the young generation learn its history and the correct techniques. This applies to the frosting and decorating techniques. The current generation has embraced the short cuts and easy way of doing things, but not the art of cake decorating. One company, Wilton, has been a long standing promoter and teacher of basic techniques. However, they have decided to no longer provide face-to-face classes. They are continuing to provide their educational services on line. The one-on-one teaching and learning techniques will be gone. This generation will learn from watching computers. ICES has a chance to make this better. ICES can reach out to these students and show them the services that are available to its membership. Decorators and sugar artists of any level can learn from older techniques to improve their skills.

Utilizing the ICES Days of Sharing in the chapters is a unique chance to reach out to prospective members and other organizations' members to make them aware of ICES and its opportunities. ICES also needs to reach out to the retail stores to explain the benefits of keeping their customers and available products while continuing to focus on cake decorating and sugar artistry. Promotion of ICES annual Convention and its opportunities can also reinforce the importance of the sugar arts market.

#### 4. Management Team

ICES is recognized as a Membership Based organization incorporated under Michigan Nonprofit Law. The management team is comprised of volunteers. The ICES Board of Directors is elected by the membership. The other management personnel, Show Directors, Instructors, and Committee members are also volunteers and some are selected for certain positions. The organization also has a few paid contractors.

The Board of Directors have general supervision of ICES' affairs between its business meetings and will perform duties as specified in the Bylaws. The Show Directors and their committees oversee all the affairs dealing with the annual Convention. The contractors are selected to meet contracted positions. It is vital that the contractors are members of the organization or a good working knowledge. The instructors within the organization provide the educational requirement for the membership; some are compensated for their classes.

To serve on the Board of Directors, a member must have been a member in good standing for at least three (3) consecutive years immediately prior to nomination and attended at least one annual meeting and one midyear meeting or Representatives Annual Meeting. The directors are elected from the general membership. The elected directors bring a wide variety of experiences and talents to the Board. The Show Directors usually have some experience on other show committees and are mentored during their terms. The contractors were selected for their expertise to complete the contract. The instructors have a wide variety of talents in different sugar art mediums and provide the expertise to the membership.

The Board of Directors, Show Directors, and Contractors work day-to-day on the organizations' activities and issues through e-mail and webinars.

The ICES Board of Directors, Show Directors, various Committees, Contractors, and Instructors need to become more proactive. Everyone needs to encourage our members to share and invite their cake friends to join and participate in the various state wide and national events (DOS and Mini-Classes and Convention). ICES should encourage the international members to mirror similar events as the local US chapters and invite their cake community to participate and possibly join; additional exposure will peak interest.

## **5. Financial Plan:**

Currently ICES has some financial obligations of \$150,000.00 per year in addition to all show and mid-year financial obligations.

This fiscal year the ICES Board of Directors has led an intense reevaluation of the organization's budget and its obligations. Several contractual obligations have been renegotiated, reducing some and eliminating others. The Board has also implemented a gradual increase in membership dues over the next three years. A digital membership (receiving the newsletter digitally) is emphasized as the best value. Each program Chair on the Board is responsible for profit and loss for their programs and must present a plan to make each program self-sufficient. The Board and the Show Directors have reviewed show budgets; making cuts where feasible and increases where possible. The organization will continue monitoring and adjust the budgets, as needed. As a not-for-profit organization, the management team is always cognizant of the limitations for raising funds. The three-year plan shows the board's actions to increase the membership and how the expenses have been decreased and continue through 2020. One of the major goals is to have all programs, including the convention, self-sufficient. (i.e., ways & means and Certification) This change will focus on the fiscal side of the programs ensuring they can pay for themselves.

With the current changes, the organization will see an increase in membership, switching digital newsletters and more successful Conventions. The organization is focused on finding locations for future Conventions that excite both the membership and the vendors.

The entire organization is aware of the current financial difficulties. The Board has put many changes in place to keep the costs down and decreased additional spending. The current finances are fluctuating and should be monitored closely. As the organization continues to adjust to the financial changes, the Board will focus on the new direction based on those changes to provide for a better future for the organization. Over the past year, the Board has made changes to be in place for at least the next three years to continue to address the financial situation. The membership has been made aware of the situation and will continue to be updated on the organizations progress to a balanced budget.