Purpose—the firewood industry serves about one and a half percent of the domestic household heating market and thus has a great potential to grow market share versus the competition with fossil fuels. While most firewood industry participants think of growing their sales volume with current buyers the real potential growth of their sales is to unite with others in the industry to produce better stoves that are more affordable and have less smoke and unwanted emissions. This handout discusses ideas to help the firewood industry network with other participants to grow a much larger firewood industry.

Big ideas to grow the industry—providing $2 billion of the $187 billion US household heating market leaves lots of room to grow the firewood industry in terms of sales and profitability for all the businesses involved in the firewood industry. Listed below are some big ideas to grow the industry to every participant’s benefit:

1. Develop more affordable stoves and heat distribution systems
2. Develop stoves that can burn more forms of firewood
3. Develop stoves with some automation features
4. Market wood stoves to local governments and schools
5. Develop more uses for hot water, especially in the summer months
6. Develop a home delivery service that is easy for households to use firewood

Develop more affordable stoves and heat distribution systems—households who what to pay for wood stove heating systems with $ saved by using a lower cost fuel than fossil fuels are limited by the cost of the firewood heating system given that a rough estimate of the annual cost of energy for household heating is about $1,500 a year. Most homeowners have a payback period they find acceptable, and most prefer something less than three to five years. Quicker payback periods really push the demand for new stoves and firewood sales, so it is in the industry’s interest to make better stoves that offer affordability.

Develop stoves that can burn more forms of firewood—large stickwood firewood cannot be handled by the public as smaller pieces of firewood. This is one reason that homeowners find pellet stoves attractive. Other forms of firewood the industry should consider include wood blocks (4” to 12” long), wood chips and sawdust.

Market wood stoves to local governments and schools—our industry has a natural ally in local governments and schools who spend large amounts of their annual budgets for heating buildings and hot water because when buying from local providers for firewood they are supporting the local tax base. Very little of $ spent by local government for firewood goes out of the local community.
Market wood stoves to business and commercial facilities—businesses seek lower cost energy and wood is the cheapest energy source available on a large scale that can consistently provide heat and hot water without a backup system. The problem for the business community is the length of the payback period, emissions and automation. The industry needs to work on affordability and emissions in order to grow the number of businesses using firewood and automation to reduce the time required by employees to monitor the heating system.

Develop more uses for hot water—limiting the firewood industry to space heating and domestic hot water limits the ability of users to justify firewood heating systems. We have two potential uses of firewood energy that can help buyers to justify new firewood heating systems:

- **Air cooling**—hot water air cooling systems have been commercially available for forty years or more and there are smaller systems available that are feasible when used on multiple family home projects, commercial office buildings, factories, and other locations where there is a larger demand than for a single family household. Our firewood industry needs to make contact with the makers of the hot water air cooling systems and learn how to incorporate this needed use of hot water during summer months to drive a year around demand for firewood.

- **Electrical power**—energy flowing from hot to cold can generate an electric current and this can be seen on many YouTube videos that typically show a cup of hot water and a cup of cold water powering a small electric fan. The concept is called “Thermoelectrical” and our industry should research the latest developments on generating electrical power from hot water stoves.

Develop a home delivery service that is easy for households to use firewood—few members of the public are willing to perform the manual tasks required to operate a stick outdoor hot water wood stove. We as an industry in addition to developing hot water wood stoves that use wood smaller than split firewood have to create home and business delivery systems and formats that make operating a firewood heating system for residential, commercial, government, schools and business facilities relatively easy.

Networking is important—it will take a coordinated effort by all the players in the industry working together to create a new firewood industry that offers users affordability and ease in order to grow our industry. We as individual members of the industry need to network at a higher level and find ways to cooperate with other members of the industry to reduce the cost of heating systems to make them more affordable and to find ways to make the use of firewood easier for households as well as businesses, government, schools and commercial facilities.