

Co-op Members' Roles and Responsibilities

Let's get started

- Enter your name and pronouns by clicking the three dots in the upper righthand corner of your Zoom square
- Mute yourself when you're not speaking by clicking the microphone button
- Please join us on camera if able
- Questions - Raise your hand to join stack or drop your question in the chat

Checking in

Let's check-in using the chat window!

- Name, Pronouns, Co-op
- Access Needs
- Land Recognition

Overview

- What is cooperative membership?
- Member role in electing officers and informing their decisions
- What are a member's responsibilities and how are they defined?
- Culture of cooperation

What is Cooperative Membership?

Cooperative Membership

1. Voluntary, Open Ownership
2. Democratic Owner Control
3. Member-Owner Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern For the Community

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

- *Statement of Identity from the International Cooperative Alliance*

Does your co-op have unique ways of keeping the co-op principles present in your co-op and noticed by members?



Individual members and the general membership

Individual Members

- Contribute to the Co-op's economic operation*
- Follow Co-op policies set by the General Membership or its assignees
- Be informed about co-op's work
- Work to support the co-op's mission
- Engage in group decision making

Individual members do not have the authority of the General Membership.

The General Membership

- The highest authority in most co-ops is collective decisions of all members**
- Establishes and defines mission
- Delegates authority to Board, Staff, etc.
- Ensures that participation is accessible to all members

The General Membership can only act when there is a meeting, referendum, or other official action.

Promoting active democracy

Member participation and engagement is directly related to members understanding their powers and responsibilities in the co-op. Having democratic control over living conditions in the co-op is a strong motivator for members to participate in co-op operations.

Voluntary and Open Ownership

To have voluntary and open membership cooperatives must be inclusive spaces. Especially with housing cooperatives, the concept of 'home' is designed to be a safe space, and a refuge. If membership in the co-op is exposing members to harassment or marginalization based on their identities, the co-op is not open to those members.

Co-op members are responsible for ensuring that neither they nor the co-op contribute to the oppression of other members.

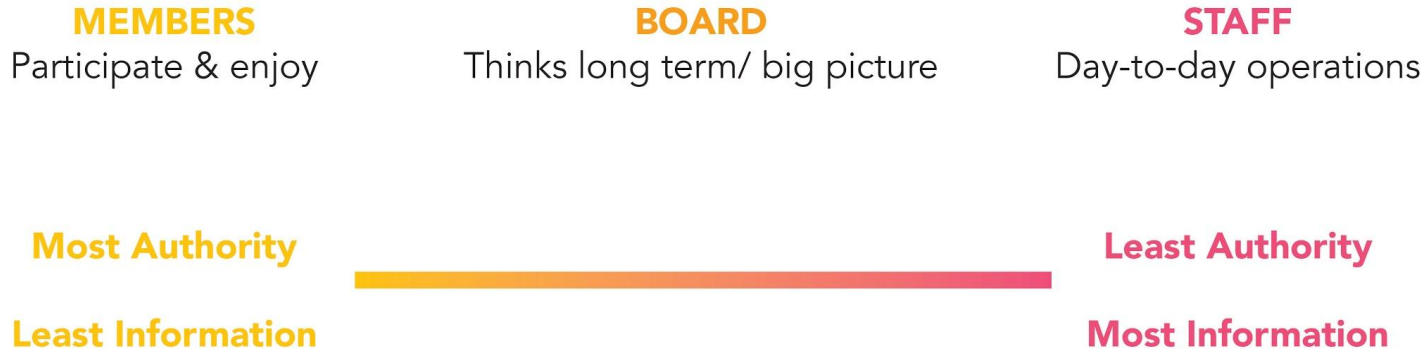
"We are committed to overcoming all forms of oppression including but not limited to oppression based on race, class, sex, gender, ability, sexual orientation, age, nationality, religion, political affiliation, citizenship, level of education. We cannot claim to be voluntary and open organizations while remaining neutral in the face of systems of oppression."

NASCO's interpretation of the ICA Cooperative Principles



Member role

Roles of Members, Board, and Staff



Member role

Decision-maker

- All cooperatives elect board members and inform board decisions. Each co-op defines *how* members inform and elect their boards, and participate in decision-making differently.

Contributor

- Economic participation by members through money, services, or member labor enables the co-op to function and remain sustainable for future members. Member labor systems are designed to contribute to the quality of life at the cooperative and to increase affordability.

Collective interest actor

- Members act in the collective interest of the organization by following co-op policies and voicing concerns when policy is not equitable or serving the interests of current members.

Member role

Advocate

- The voices of members are one of the greatest advantages that co-ops have when comparing themselves to other kinds of businesses. Members have a role in advocating that their co-op be a place they are excited to be involved in. Members also have a role in representing their co-op to the potential members and communities around them.

Whole person

- Co-op membership - especially in a housing co-op - means close interactions with other humans. The policies and mission of a co-op are meant to support the needs of members, but the reality can be messy. A member in a co-op has a role to be clear about their needs and identity so the co-op can meet those needs, and be understanding about others' needs.

Member responsibilities

As outlined in member contract

- Member responsibilities should be laid out in membership contract or lease agreement
- This is a tool to hold members accountable - and for members to hold the co-op accountable
- Covers legal responsibilities tied to providing a safe living environment

Responsibilities to future co-op members

The co-op has a responsibility to you and to meet its current mission. You as a co-op member are responsible for contributing to sustaining that mission.

This is outlined differently at each co-op. Member labor can physically improve the space for future members, member labor can create traditions that improve quality of life, member labor can improve affordability.

Cooperatives all have some form of member responsibilities. Depending on the systems and culture built up at a co-op members responsibility may be most of the operations or only a small portion.

Co-op members are responsible for ensuring that neither they nor the co-op contribute to the oppression of other members.



Membership and Fair Housing

Members do have some legal responsibilities involved in membership regardless of their internal policies, leases, or mission.

Members that participate in recruitment, decision making and member orientation must be aware of and follow Fair Housing laws. Spoiler: this is every member and officer, and also any person who interacts with an applicant.

Housing cooperatives are both a home and community serving their members, as well as a public housing provider. This is because co-ops offer open membership to any person who is eligible, and are not purely private residences.

Communicating Member Expectations

Recruitment

- Describe the co-op in advertising material
 - Include clear expectations of members including time commitments, financial commitments, and labor commitments
- Share and uplift member testimonials of rewarding participation
- Build a thorough membership applications and interview process
 - Include educational descriptions about how your co-op functions
 - Ask questions about communal living including addressing conflict, communicating needs, experience with living in community
 - Give applicants space to ask clarifying questions and share concerns about membership or responsibilities

Perpetuating the co-op's mission

Co-ops must both respond to the needs of members and also follow their mission. Centering that mission in membership recruitment will bring in future members who support your co-op's purpose.

Emphasizing your co-op's mission and programs will also make the co-op stand out among housing providers and so reduce vacancies in the future.

Many co-ops find that the average quality of applications improves when applicants have a clear idea of what they are applying for. This allows for more relevant answers in applications, and also attracts people most likely to be aligned with the co-op's work.

Orientation

- Community agreements, house rules
- Regularly updated house / co-op guide
- Tours of the co-op focusing on facilities needed for daily life
- New member buddy - give members someone to ask questions
- Social time to encourage community
- In larger co-ops more effort can go into putting faces to names

Board communication

- Holding all member meetings, or dedicated board meeting time for member concerns
- Board communications to members should promote transparency
 - Clear reporting
 - Asks for input
 - Explanation for major decisions
- Using accessible language (avoid legal language or acronyms)
- Board members are members avoid creating a divide between board and member work

Staff Communication

- Staff and members may overlap so it is important to have clearly defined tasks and responsibilities for both.
- Clear channels for communicating with staff
- Respecting work life balance of staff that do or do not live at the co-op

Fostering a culture of cooperation

Promoting democratic control

Best practices include:

- Annual governance calendar made public and accessible to members
- All member meetings where major co-op decisions are made with notice
- Board time dedicated to member concerns
- Suggestion forms

Member contributions

- Clear expectations
- Celebration of contributions
- Reasonable accommodations
- Welcome feedback

Visually build culture

- Member murals
- Informative art
- Signs to check in
- State your values

Feel like shit? Don't
Know why? Losing Hope?
strength = ASKING FOR HELP!

Hungry When was your last meal?
Have you been drinking enough
water?
Low blood sugar?

Angry Is something going on in your
life that you don't like?
Have you taken your meds?

Lonely When was the last time you talked
to someone? hugged someone?
Saw a good friend?

Tired How long have you been awake?
How long have you been standing?
How long since you had some ~~rest~~
me time?

Is your sleep schedule ruined?
are you emotionally tired?
Have you been doing this a while?



POSITIONS	1. THE BIZ	GUESTS
1. 1st Vice President	1. 1st Vice President	1. 1st Vice President
2. 2nd Vice President	2. 2nd Vice President	2. 2nd Vice President
3. 3rd Vice President	3. 3rd Vice President	3. 3rd Vice President
4. 4th Vice President	4. 4th Vice President	4. 4th Vice President
5. 5th Vice President	5. 5th Vice President	5. 5th Vice President
6. 6th Vice President	6. 6th Vice President	6. 6th Vice President
7. 7th Vice President	7. 7th Vice President	7. 7th Vice President
8. 8th Vice President	8. 8th Vice President	8. 8th Vice President
9. 9th Vice President	9. 9th Vice President	9. 9th Vice President
10. 10th Vice President	10. 10th Vice President	10. 10th Vice President
11. 11th Vice President	11. 11th Vice President	11. 11th Vice President
12. 12th Vice President	12. 12th Vice President	12. 12th Vice President
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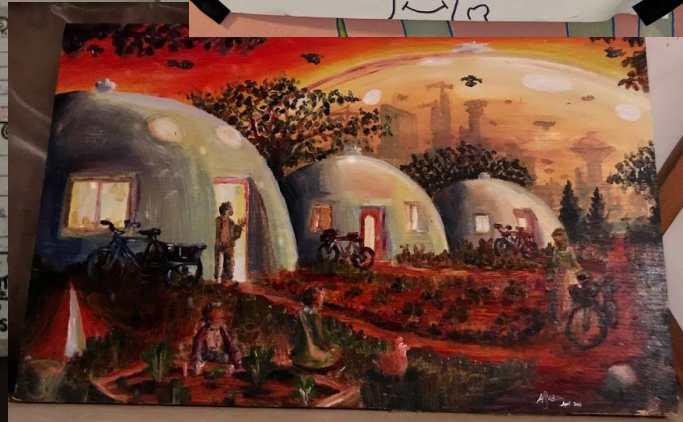
By entering our space you're agreeing to the following rules.

Failure to do so will get you kicked out

1. No sexual harassment or assault.
If you are making someone feel uncomfortable even if you don't consider it harassment or assault, we reserve the right to kick you out.
2. Purposeful damage to property is not permitted.
3. People live here and they need to feel safe. Do not enter any bedrooms without permission from the occupant.
4. We support free love but this is our home. If you are caught committing sexual acts in the bathrooms and bedrooms (w/o permission) you will be thrown out.

ENJOY THE PARTY!

WELCOME TO WATERMYN!





Making the Co-op Visible in the Community

The co-op should be representative of the community it serves. To do so, the co-op's recruitment strategy should seek to reach all parts of that community.

Go beyond Word of Mouth. If the co-op relies only on this, the population will become self-selected, homogenous, and less visible to the community.

Relationships with community organizations can help reach different populations.

Community events are excellent places for the co-op to make itself visible.

Clear, and visible branding helps community members recognize the co-op in printed and online materials.



Benefits of co-op membership

- Member control
- Commitment to safer spaces
- Affordable housing
- Community involvement
- Member services

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Thanks!

