

# George Street Co-op

## Membership Manual

Revised December 2024

### Introduction

Welcome to membership in the George Street Co-op. You are the foundation of the Co-op, our member-owned, not-for-profit organization. The purpose of this manual is to provide a reference guide which we hope you will find helpful. Please take the time to read through it carefully. Co-ops thrive by the active participation of its members. We are looking forward to you becoming an active member of our Co-op.

### Mission Statement

*The George Street Co-op is creating a place for people who value healthy food, a healthy planet, and cooperation.*

### What Is a Co-op?

A cooperative is a form of business owned by and operated for the benefit of those who use its goods and services. Members of a cooperative support it with their patronage and participate in the decision making through a democratic process. In a cooperative, you and others with common interests act together and pool your resources for mutual gain. Through this type of owner control, cooperatives extend the true democratic practice into the economic world. And beyond providing economic benefits, co-ops also offer quality goods and services, community building, and working together for the common good.

### History of the George Street Co-op

The George Street Co-op began in the early 1970s in New Brunswick, NJ. A small number of Rutgers students formed a Vegetarian Club and started a buying group for organic foods. The first purchase was a case of Calimyrna figs. They eventually grew out of their dorm rooms and rented half of a two-car garage near Saint Peter's Hospital where they organized weekly ordering, buying, and distribution sessions. The membership continued to grow, eventually opening a retail space at 285 George Street and hiring its first staff person, Dennis Shorthouse, who served as the Co-op's coordinator. We incorporated in April of 1978, created our by-laws, and moved to our current location at 89 Morris Street in the mid 1980s. In September of 1986, we purchased the building. The Co-op continues as a vegetarian, member-owned, not-for-profit, natural health-food store that runs by democratic process to meet as many member's needs as possible.

Our Co-op embraces the "people helping people" philosophy and embodies democracy, equality, social equity and responsibility, cooperation, and connection. As a George Street Co-op member, you are eligible to serve on committees, seek election to the Board of Directors, and vote on referendums.

### Structure of the George Street Co-op

#### The Membership

Members are the owners and shareholders of our Co-op. The Co-op exists because of its members and for the benefit of its members. They provide the capital and labor, and they participate in the democratic process that establishes Co-op policies and governance. Membership requires a one-time equity investment and a yearly membership fee. It is important that members exercise their voting rights, remain active, and stay aware of Co-op activities so that they can fully participate in and guide the future of the Co-op. The Co-op welcomes people from all walks of life.

## The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is the administrative body of the George Street Co-op and is responsible for the Co-op as a legal corporation. Representing the members, the Board of Directors ensures compliance with the Co-op By-Laws; establishes Co-op policies; oversees Co-op operations; hires and evaluates the General Manager; approves Co-op special projects; votes on major financial expenditures; appoints committee chairs, and guides committee activities.

In addition to participating directly in Board activities, each Director is required to serve on at least one committee. Directors are elected by the membership for three-year terms, with no limit on the number of terms a Director can serve. There are seats for up to 12 Board Directors. If there are unfilled positions, Directors may be appointed to the Board by a vote of the sitting Directors. All Co-op members in good standing are eligible to serve on the Board of Directors. Those who wish to do so should obtain a petition from the chair of the Meetings and Elections committee.

Each year, the sitting Board appoints four of its own members to serve as President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

The Board of Directors sets the agenda for their meetings which take place on the second Monday of each month at 7:30 PM, generally at the Co-op. Board meetings are open to all Co-op members, and everyone is encouraged to attend.

## Committees

In order to fulfill its responsibilities, the Board of Directors establishes committees focused on specialized areas of concern. The Board establishes standing committees (documented in the By-Laws) to address ongoing areas of concern, whereas the Board establishes *ad hoc* committees to accomplish specific and finite tasks. All committee chairs are appointed by and are accountable to the Board. All Co-op members in good standing are eligible to serve on committees.

Co-op members may attend all committee meetings, except when confidentiality is required. Meeting dates are posted in advance on the Co-op's online calendar ([georgestreetcoop.com/calendar](http://georgestreetcoop.com/calendar)).

### The committees authorized in the By-Laws are:

**Facilities:** Maintains store premises and equipment to provide a safe and efficient store environment.

**Finance:** Reviews and evaluates all financial reports; prepares the annual budget and financial report as well as regular reports of Co-op income, expenditures, and debts.

**Meetings and Elections:** Plans and schedules all general membership meetings; oversees voting and referendums.

**Membership:** Creates and monitors policies for the membership, including member labor, discount structures, and membership renewals. This committee includes Volunteer Coordination which recruits, schedules, trains, and oversees all volunteers working in the store; and Orientation which conducts new member orientations.

**Outreach:** Advertises and publicizes the work of the Co-op; conducts events to raise funds and build community at the Co-op.

**Personnel:** Sets and monitors policies for dealing with store management and paid employees; oversees evaluation of the General Manager.

**Product:** Solicits feedback from shoppers; monitors that product choices adhere to the Articles of Incorporation; facilitates and creates policies and guidelines for products sold in the store.

**Technology:** Works on all operational and technical issues related to the computer hardware and software needs of the Co-op.

For detailed descriptions of these committees, refer to Article V of the By-Laws ([georgestreetcoop.com/bylaws/#artV](http://georgestreetcoop.com/bylaws/#artV)).

## Management and Staff

The General Manager (GM) is hired by and reports to the Board of Directors. The responsibilities of the GM include store operations and long-term planning (in coordination with the Board). The GM hires other full- and part-time staff to supplement member labor and ensure smooth functioning of the store. Paid staff may include department managers, a bookkeeper, stockers/receivers, and cashiers. The GM also oversees in-store volunteer workers and serves as a member on the Personnel, Finance, and other relevant committees. Management and staff are required to become members as a condition of continued employment to help ensure their understanding of the principles and purpose of the George Street Co-op.

## Membership in The George Street Co-op

### Member Benefits

**Ownership:** The Co-op members own a share in the business through their equity investment. Each member has a voice in determining the direction of the Co-op.

**Leadership Opportunities:** Every member in good standing is entitled to seek election or appointment to the Board of Directors. In addition, members may seek to join or be appointed to chair a Co-op committee.

**Voting:** Members in good standing are entitled to vote on issues that affect the Co-op, such as the work requirements, member discounts, equity deposit, and membership fees. Members also elect representatives to the Board of Directors. In addition, members can petition the Board to hold a referendum.

**Discount:** All Co-op members in good standing receive discounts on their store purchases. The discount amount varies by each member's level of volunteer participation.

**Special Ordering:** Orders can be placed for most items available through our distributors whether or not they are routinely stocked in the store. Additional discounts are offered to members buying in case lots. Special orders must be consistent with the policies governing products sold in the store.

**Work Experience:** Co-op members can learn new skills through involvement on committees and/or the Board of Directors, through classes held at the Co-op, and by working on a variety of tasks both in and out of the store.

**Community / Networking:** The Co-op is a shared space where people with common interests naturally congregate. At the Co-op, you can connect with diverse individuals from all walks of life.

**Communication:** Through classes, public events, newsletters, online forums, and social media, the Co-op fosters an informed, creative community.

### Member Responsibilities

*The Co-op prospers when its membership is informed and involved.*

#### Stay informed

**Attend an Orientation meeting.** Dates are posted in the store and on the Co-op calendar online

**Understand the Co-op's Mission Statement.** It's at the top of our website

**Read the Co-op By-Laws.** Available at [georgestreetcoop.com/bylaws](http://georgestreetcoop.com/bylaws)

**Read the Membership Manual.** Understanding the benefits and responsibilities of membership empowers you to fully participate in the Co-op. It's available on the Co-op website.

#### Stay involved

The Co-op offers opportunities for almost any interest.

**Work in the store.** Schedule your work shift by contacting the store Manager.

**Join a committee or special project.** Contact the chairperson of the committee you want to join.

**Attend general membership meetings.** As required in our By-laws, the Co-op holds two general membership meetings per year. Agendas are posted in the store and online 2 weeks prior to these meetings.

**Vote.** Your vote counts and is the expression of your ownership privileges. All members are requested to be involved in Co-op decisions, particularly those by referendum.

**Attend Board meetings.** All members are invited to attend Board meetings, held on the second Monday of each month. Any member who would like to add a topic to the agenda should contact the Board president at least 1 week before the meeting.

## **Maintain your Membership in Good Standing**

Complete the Membership Agreement form, and keep up with equity payments until paid in full (or participate in the Sweat Equity program until your work commitment is completed).

Each subsequent year of membership, complete a new Membership Agreement form and pay the annual renewal fee.

# **The Democratic Process**

There are several ways members in good standing can participate in the democracy of our Co-op.

## **General Membership Meetings**

General Membership Meetings are held at least twice a year and all members are encouraged to attend. All topics placed on the agenda are open to member discussion, and potentially to member vote. The Spring Membership Meeting mandatorily includes the fiscal budget as a topic, and often includes presentations of new Board candidates and of potential changes to membership policy and discount structure. Agenda items are established by a resolution of the Board or by a petition signed by at least 10 Co-op members and are posted prior to the meeting.

## **Board of Directors Meetings**

Board of Directors Meetings take place on the second Monday of each month. Members are encouraged to attend Board meetings and participate in discussions. Any member who would like to add a topic to the agenda is requested to contact the Board president at least 1 week before the meeting.

## **Committee Meetings**

All scheduled committee meetings are posted on the Co-op's calendar, both in the store and online ([georgestreetcoop.com/calendar](http://georgestreetcoop.com/calendar)). Members are encouraged to attend meetings of committees relevant to their interests, and to suggest agenda topics as appropriate.

## **Referendums**

Referendums, which are votes on a specific issue, are a vital component of the democratic process. A referendum may be called by a resolution from the Board of Directors or by 2/3 of members voting at a membership meeting. Results of the referendum are decided by a simple majority vote of the members participating, unless otherwise established in the By-Laws. Results are posted in the store and on the Co-op website.

A referendum to amend the By-Laws may be called by the Board of Directors or a simple majority vote of the members voting at a membership meeting. Passage of a referendum to amend the By-Laws requires a 2/3 majority vote of those participating.

# Work Commitment

While participating as a volunteer worker is not a requirement, the cooperative concept is deeply rooted in member participation, and therefore the policy of our Co-op is to promote volunteer member labor. Participation as a volunteer may take many forms including cashiering, stocking shelves, working on a committee or serving on the Board of Directors. All of these functions are vital to the Co-op and its community.

## Work & Discount Levels

**SuperWorkers:** SuperWorkers who work 24 hours in a calendar month receive a 25% discount on their purchases. All of these hours must be worked in the store in a consistently scheduled work shift.

**Weekly Workers:** Weekly Workers work at least 8 hours (10 hours for households) in a calendar month in or out of the store and receive a 15% discount on their purchases.

**Monthly Workers:** Monthly Workers work at least 2 hours per month (3 hours for households) in or out of the store and receive an 8% discount on their purchases.

**Fallback Discount:** If a worker falls short on their work commitment, their discount falls back to the highest discount level they worked sufficient hours for. The hours in excess of the received discount level will be banked for future discount calculations. This happens automatically, with no action required on the part of the volunteer.

**Work Approval:** All work hours are subject to the approval of the Co-op General Manager or their designee, committee chair, or Board officer who scheduled the worker.

**Non-Working Members:** Non-working members have no work requirement and receive a 5% discount.

**All senior shoppers** (currently age 62+) receive a 5% discount. For members who are seniors, the 5% discount is in addition to their regular discount.

You may change your worker type at any time.

## Types of Volunteer Work

### Store Work

Store work is scheduled with the Volunteer Coordinator in order to meet the needs of the store while accommodating volunteers' needs as much as possible. Assigned tasks may include cashiering, stocking shelves, cleaning and organizing, customer service, maintaining displays and produce, and other duties that are required to run a small grocery store. The first time you work, the Volunteer Coordinator will set up your training with another member worker or a staff person. Store volunteers are expected to maintain professional standards, just as they would if paid staff. All volunteers are required to sign off on the Workplace Policy for Volunteers (see Manager for this document) either before or just after training.

### Committee Work

Committee work is arranged with the relevant committee chairs, in order to meet the committees' responsibilities to the Board of Directors and to the Co-op. Committees operate on goal-oriented activities and can often offer members greater flexibility in work hours and in work options. The individual committees have been described previously in this manual.

**Note:** The adopted policy dated 2024-10-24, defines the minimum ages for volunteers as follows:

Volunteers aged 14 and older may work for the Co-op unaccompanied.

Volunteers between the ages of 12 and 14 may work for the Co-op if accompanied by an adult. The accompanying adult must be either the child's legal guardian, or another adult designated by the guardian and communicated in advance to Co-op management.

Children under 12 are not eligible to be considered as volunteers, but are welcome to accompany their legal guardians (or a designated adult) during their volunteer time. In either of the cases where a child is accompanied by an adult, that adult is expected to monitor their behavior.

## **Investment and Fee Commitments**

### **Equity**

Membership in the Co-op is an investment, and that commitment can take the form of a \$100 monetary payment of equity OR (for those who qualify) a 10-hour labor investment called Sweat Equity.

Monetary equity (also known as Standard Equity) may be paid in full, or in \$25 quarterly installments. Your membership begins with your first payment in either case. If you choose to end your Co-op membership, half your monetary equity is refundable provided that you request the refund within one year of non-renewal of your membership. Equity Refund Request forms are available at the Co-op, and requests are processed within 90 days.

Sweat Equity is available to students and those whose annual income is less than twice the official federal poverty level. Sweat Equity work must take place in the store and the 10 hours must be completed within 5 months of joining.

Regardless of how you fulfill this requirement, you are investing in the future of the Co-op

### **Annual Renewal Fee**

To continue your membership after the first year, you must pay a \$20 annual renewal fee.

### **Household Commitments**

Household memberships allow people living in the same domicile to share most of the benefits of membership at a reduced cost. Under a household membership, each member may shop separately and receive a discount; however that discount is computed for the household as a whole, based on the household's total work contribution.

Household memberships have analogous investment requirements, except most quantities are 1½ times the commitment amounts for individuals:

- Monetary equity requirement is \$150 for households, instead of \$100 (however the installments remain \$25 every 3 months until paid in full)
- Equity refund amount is \$75 for households, instead of \$50
- Sweat Equity requirement is 15 hours for households, instead of 10 hours
- Renewal fee is \$30 for households, instead of \$20

Households are eligible for Sweat Equity only if each member of the household is individually eligible.

## **General Policies**

### **Parking**

The Co-op pays for 5 parking spaces on the left side of our building which customers can use while shopping. Metered on-street parking is also available, as well as paid parking at the Morris Street deck. In addition, free parking is often available one block away on Welton Street.

### **Theft Policy**

Anyone, member or non-member, caught stealing will not be allowed to shop at the Co-op. The George Street Co-op reserves the right to prosecute all offenders for shoplifting. Eating food out of the bulk bins prior to purchase is considered stealing.

## Return Policy

Unopened nonperishable items may be returned within a week of purchase for store credit. Defective products and prematurely spoiled perishables will be replaced with the same item or with a store credit if returned before the expiration date. All returns require a store receipt. For returns of special orders, see below.

## Special Order Policy

Members are able to special order items carried by Co-op distributors and that meet the requirements of the Co-op's By-Laws. You can save money by ordering in case lots, which have a discounted markup rate. Distributor catalogs are available in the store, and the Manager on duty can place your request into our ordering system. All special orders must be picked up within 3 days of notification unless previous arrangements have been made.

Because special orders are tailored to a customer's specific need, they are generally not returnable, except in cases of defect or spoilage.

## Discounts

All Co-op members in good standing are entitled to a discount on their purchases. The cashier will ask if you are a member-owner and will apply your discount to your purchase. If you believe there is an error with the discount applied, please email [membership@georgestreetcoop.com](mailto:membership@georgestreetcoop.com). Your concern will be investigated, and you will be contacted about the results.

## Member Check Writing

Members in good standing may write personal checks to pay for their purchases. If a member's check bounces, they are ineligible for member discount until they reimburse the Co-op for the original check amount plus fees incurred. Repeated bounced checks will result in the loss of check writing privileges.

## Recycling at the Co-op

The George Street Co-op recycles all paper, cardboard, glass, and recyclable plastic products used in our store. We encourage all shoppers to purchase bulk products and bring their own containers and bags; however, we do provide new ones.

Please do not bring your own recycling to the Co-op.

## Concluding Remarks

We hope that this manual has provided you with a better understanding of cooperatives in general and of the George Street Co-op in particular. Our Co-op exists by virtue of the dedication and hard work of thousands of members over the years, and we hope that you will enjoy your experience and discover the many opportunities open to you. Every good change that has happened at our Co-op has been because a member had a good idea and worked to make it happen. The more you support your Co-op with your patronage and participation, the more your Co-op will offer you. **Help us build the cooperative movement and make our Co-op as strong as it can be by sharing the benefits of membership with friends, family, co-workers, and your community.**

*Welcome!*

# Cooperative Philosophies

## What is a Cooperative?

A co-op is a business that is owned and self-managed by its members with the principle of one member, one vote. There is no one individual who can make decisions by themselves and for their own personal benefit. The true values that form the base of any cooperative are democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. The management structures and day-to-day operations are designed according to the needs and desires of the co-op members.

There are many types of cooperatives:

- **Worker Co-op:** a business that is owned and controlled by the workers, who together decide the business operations, strategic directions, profit distributions, etc. like Equal Exchange and Cooperative Home Care Associates
- **Consumer Co-op:** Owned by members who direct the co-op to purchase the goods or services they need. This model is often seen in groceries, electrical distribution, childcare, banking, and housing like UW Credit Union and REI. Today there are 838 not-for-profit consumer-owned electric cooperatives that provide service to 42 million people in 47 states. They often promote the use of clean energy instead of fossil fuels.
- **Producer Co-op:** Producers of a product band together to have a greater market share. Members are usually the businesses themselves, not individuals, and these co-ops are often seen in agriculture like Dairy Farmers of America, and Ocean Spray
- **Purchasing Co-op:** Purchasers of a product band together to improve their purchasing power. Members are usually the businesses themselves, not individuals, like ACE Hardware and Independent Pharmacy Cooperative
- **Multi-Stakeholder Co-op:** Owned and controlled by a mix of members and workers like Weaver Street Market.
- **Housing Co-op:** A legal term for a housing unit that is owned and controlled jointly by a group of individuals who have equal shares, membership, and/or occupancy rights. It is a nonprofit corporation, complete with a board of directors, and each resident is a shareholder. This means the co-op owner does not actually own his or her unit, but instead owns shares of the co-op relative to the size and desirability of the unit.

## The Cooperative Movement

Cooperatives are not a new idea. Today the International Cooperative Association's research shows that "at least 12% of humanity is a cooperator of any of the 3 million cooperatives on earth".

Human survival has always depended on working together. Cooperativism stretches back to early African civilizations, American First nations, and other populations across the globe whose fundamental principles for economic organization were (and still are) balance, solidarity, and reciprocity.

Cooperative business, as we know it, grew out of the suffering and deprivation of Europe in the 1800s. Crop failures, famine, political upheaval, and the misery caused by the early industrial revolution all pushed people toward cooperative solutions.

Mutual aid and cooperatives are a big part of Black history in the United States. Racism and inequality created countless situations where people had no choice but to help themselves and cooperatives have been a big part of that.

In Rochdale, England, a cooperative store started in 1844 and became the model for cooperatives the world over. The Rochdale Pioneers created basic practices, known as the Rochdale Principles, which were looked upon as the main tenets for how cooperatives operated.



### Three lessons that are important to note from The Rochdale Pioneers are

- **Social justice:** They tied social justice into their business from the beginning. They boycotted US cotton during the American Civil War. Women were owner-members and had the right to vote in the co-op 80 years before they could vote in the British parliamentary system. Married women were legally allowed to keep their own wages.
- **Politics:** They eventually created their own political party to advocate for their needs. The Co-operative Party still exists and often works very closely with the Labour Party.
- **The Importance of a network:** They needed goods to sell in their store so they built factories to make them. Their members needed housing, so they built housing. They needed ships to move their goods, so they built a shipping company. They filled their own needs for insurance, banking, and unionizing. Each of these actions make them stronger and more self-reliant. The bank and union they created still exist today.

Historically, cooperatives have emerged whenever there's a common need to be met through group effort, and they have traditionally delivered services that no other private enterprise was willing to provide.

- Ben Franklin organized the first recorded cooperative in the U.S., a mutual insurance society for protection from loss by fire.
- Throughout the 1800s and into this century, farm organizations have labored to find cooperative solutions to their members' economic problems. Working with the Federal Government, cooperatives have helped secure mortgage and production credit for farmers and have built a solid structure of related, cooperatively provided services.
- During the 1920s, wages and working conditions in the U.S. were improving. For the first time, many could dream of owning cars or major appliances. However, without credit, dreaming is all they could do. Banks were not serving the needs of the small borrower and saver. The credit union movement grew from seeds planted in the early 1900s to serve the financial needs of working people.
- Cooperatives have been instrumental for the past 30 years in the history of the natural food industry. Some people just refused to feed their children or themselves with unwholesome food. They organized natural food cooperatives and provided a market for many of the tiny, on-a-shoestring-budget makers of natural foods. Also, many people disillusioned with political and economic systems that set a priority on profit—rather than helping people physically, psychologically, and spiritually—fostered co-ops. It is the disillusionment with economic and other injustices and the tradition of cooperative enterprise as a vehicle for social change that keeps many cooperatives going.
- The Mondragon Corporation is the largest worker co-op to date. Founded in 1955 in the Basque region of Spain, it is now a federation of 95 cooperatives and 80,000 people (as of 2022). Their credit unions remove the reliance on outside financial institutions. Their universities provide training to their growing membership. Based on the founding principles of humanism, solidarity, and participation, their network is what gives them the self-reliance to maintain their mission without outside compromising forces.

In 1895, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) was accepted by cooperators throughout the world as the final authority for defining cooperatives and the underlying principles, which give motivation for cooperative enterprise. Now, over 200 ICA members from more than 170 countries represent more than 700 million individual members of agriculture and fishing, banking, credit and saving, energy, industrial, insurance, tourism, housing, and consumer cooperatives.

The ICA has looked at and made formal statements about the cooperative principles three times since their inception. The last time was September of 1995, when, on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Cooperative Alliance, they adopted a "Statement of Cooperative Identity" (reproduced below under "Cooperative Principles." The Statement defines cooperatives, identifies shared values, and restates and expands the previous principles. The 1995 principles are intended to guide cooperative organizations at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Cooperatives and Their Members

More than 60 million North Americans belong to cooperatives; many of them are members of more than one. From Reston, Virginia to Fresno, California, parents find quality day care in cooperatives. From Puget Sound, Washington to Hanover, New Hampshire, value-conscious consumers shop at modern, full-service retail cooperatives.

In thousands of communities and workplaces across the U.S., people look first to their credit unions for low-cost loans and secure savings. Farmers get a full range of cooperative credit services. The 12 district banks for cooperatives supply about 65% of the commodity, operating, and facility credit used by farm marketing, purchasing, and relation cooperatives. Since 1980, consumer cooperatives have been able to obtain financing from their own bank—the National Consumer Cooperative Bank.

Dairy farmers in the northeast process butter and cheese through the Cabot Cooperative, and millions of North Americans have contributed food and money to developing nations through CARE, which stands for Cooperatives for American Relief Everywhere.

Other cooperatives include: housing cooperatives; funeral and memorial societies that arrange simple dignified services for less than private funeral homes; group health cooperatives; legal service cooperatives that provide consultation as part of a group plan; and of course many consumer cooperatives like our own that offer food, furniture, pharmaceuticals, automotive services, clothing, and garden wares.

Overall, cooperative members belong to a movement that is dedicated to self-help and service for members and society.

(Sources: From *History of the Cooperative Movement* from Green Fields Market in Greenfield, MA, *Cooperative Principles Updated* written by Ann Hoyt, University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, and a paper written by Mark Quinlan while attending the Cooperative Management Institute. 1995–96, and from *Democracy at Work*, an organization founded by Richard Wolff, PhD.

## Cooperative Principles

### The International Cooperative Alliance Statement Of Cooperative Identity

Adopted September 1995

**Definition:** A cooperative 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.

**Values:** Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

**Principles:** The cooperative principles are guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice.

#### First Principle: Voluntary And Open Membership

Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibility of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

#### Second Principle: Democratic Member Control

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

### **Third Principle: Member Economic Participation**

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible, benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative, and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

### **Fourth Principle: Autonomy And Independence**

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

### **Fifth Principle: Education, Training, And Information**

Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

### **Sixth Principle: Cooperation Among Cooperatives**

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

### **Seventh Principle: Concern For The Community**

While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their community through policies accepted by their members