
Co-op Principles

Purpose of the policy

Many types of businesses are set up as co-operatives. There are farm co-ops, food co-ops, co-op daycares, housing co-ops, credit unions, worker co-ops, and so on. In 1995, the International Co-operative Alliance accepted these principles for all co-operatives. The seven principles are guidelines for co-ops to put their values into practice. They have been reworded for housing co-ops.

Open Membership	Co-op membership is open to everyone who needs the services of the co-op and who accepts the responsibilities of membership. The board of directors must not discriminate against anyone and must respect human rights.
Democratic Control	Members control their co-op. Together they set rules and policies, make decisions and elect leaders who report to them. Each member of a co-op has one vote. All members have an equal say in managing their co-op.
Economic Participation	All members contribute fairly to the co-op which they own in common. Co-ops pay a limited return (if any) on money that people paid to become members. The co-op holds any surplus for the future or uses it to improve the co-op's services.
Independence	All agreements that co-ops sign with outside organizations or governments should leave the members in control of their co-op.
Co-operative Education	Every co-op is responsible for offering training to its members, directors and staff. Co-ops should also tell the public what they are and what they do.
Co-operation Among Co-operatives	Co-ops work together to serve their members through local, national and international structures.
Community	Co-ops meet members' needs in ways that build lasting communities inside and outside each co-op.