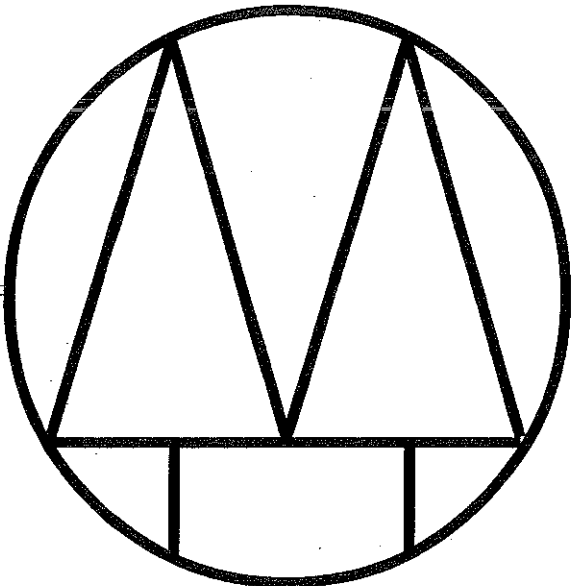


NASCO'S



HOUSE
President's
MANUAL



North American
Students of Cooperation

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Cooperative Identity Statement

Adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance to Revise The Principles Of Cooperation, September 1995

Definition: 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.

Values: Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative member believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

Principles: The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice:

1st Principle: Voluntary & Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of members, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives 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 co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote), and co-operatives on other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.

3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, 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.

4th Principle: Autonomy & Independence

Co-operatives 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 co-operative autonomy.

5th Principle: Education, Training & Information

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

6th Principle: Co-operation among Co-operatives

Co-operatives service their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, and international structures.

7th Principle: Concern for Community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

Presidential Obligations

- Coordinate house business.
- Assist the house in setting goals or objectives for the upcoming term or year.
- Coordinate the efforts of house officers.
- Act as a resource for all members of the house.
- Work towards building a community among co-op members.
- Set and post agendas for house meetings.
- Ensure that house meetings are facilitated by a skilled facilitator.
- Understand and ensure that your house operates in accordance with house constitution, by-laws, and standing rules.
- Ensure that complete and accurate house records are maintained.
- Be aware of vacancies and work with membership staff to attain full occupancy.
- Address problems before conflict reaches a crisis point.
- Resolve conflicts, mediate house disputes/problems, deal with problem members.
- Encourage leadership development and involvement.
- Represent the needs and concerns of your house to the central or corporate organization.
- Ensure that your house abides by the rules and policies of the central organization.
- Act as a public relations person for the co-op in the community.
- Educate your co-op and the community about the benefits of co-ops and the cooperative movement.
- Advocate for your co-op and the co-op movement to the university.
- Educate yourself on facilitation, conflict resolution, co-ops, and anything else which will help you do your job better.
- Duties as assigned by the co-op or central organization.

Preventing Burnout

The list of responsibilities for co-op presidents varies from organization to organization and from co-op to co-op. But all co-op house presidents, no matter what they're called, have some things in common; primarily that you are a leader. As you are probably already aware, a great deal of responsibility comes with leadership. People constantly turn to you with questions that you may not know the answers to or that may not have anything to do with your job description. When other officers fail in their responsibilities or things fall apart, you are expected to pick up the pieces, and if you care about the future of the co-op, developing future leaders often falls to you. Basically what it gets down to is that in addition to your regular responsibilities, you have the weight of the whole co-op on your shoulders. This sounds pretty horrific! Why in the world did you ever volunteer for such a position?

Remember, you are a member of a democratic organization. Although you should be the primary resource person for the other members of the co-op, and you should be able to direct traffic if the co-op falls apart, and to a large extent you are responsible for leadership development in the co-op, the weight of the co-op SHOULD NOT fall upon your shoulders.

Often people in leadership positions take on too much responsibility and bite off a bit more than they can chew. When this happens they are likely to suffer from an all too common terminal co-op disease called burn-out. Burn-out is often closely associated with another deadly co-op disease called martyrdom. Although you never know when they might creep up on you, there are ways to avoid contracting these illnesses.

1. First, be aware of your limitations, both in terms of time and skills. If there are things that you can't handle, let the co-op know that other members need to be responsible for taking care of those things. Delegation is productive, and very possible in a co-op which has other leaders and potential leaders.
2. Make sure your house mates know how to go about getting information that they might need if you are unable. Post the phone numbers of people at your central organization (officers, staff, etc.), house rules, and other useful information that members might need to have access to.
3. Educate your house mates about each officer's responsibilities and make sure that all officers give reports at co-op meetings. The entire co-op is responsible for ensuring that officers do their jobs.
4. Empower your house mates. Remind members that they also can assist in the smooth running of the co-op, leadership development, and other issues. If a member feels that something is amiss s/he has the right and the responsibility to try to correct the situation. That person might want to tell you about it later, so that you are aware of what happened.
5. Don't fall into the martyr's trap of believing that if you don't do it, it won't get done. You aren't doing your house mates any favors by taking on all of the responsibilities yourself. Members don't have the opportunity to learn necessary leadership skills and eventually become lazy because they can rely on you to do everything. People need to feel a vested interest in their co-op, and they receive that by being active members.

Starting Out Right: New Member Orientation

Chaos and disorganization can too easily be the rules of thumb at the beginning of a new term. An organized and smooth beginning will set the tone for the term and set expectations of new members as to how good a co-op can be. Since the president is the person responsible for coordinating the other officers it is vital that the president fill the gaps in the interim until these positions can be elected. If you are a returning member, you are the most appropriate person to make move in easier (if you haven't been elected yet, but want to be, this would also be the perfect opportunity to show off your skills).

- In order to keep the house clean and to make a good first impression on new members, post a volunteer work schedule. Superficial clean up jobs such as kitchen, bathroom and common area clean-ups should get your house through this period. Setting the cleanliness standard at the beginning of the term/year is important to the attitude toward cleanliness throughout the year.
- Make sure that members pay all initial charges. Help get them in the habit of paying on time.
- The first house meeting of the term should be held near the first day of the contract period. At the first house meetings co-op officers should be elected (some co-ops choose temporary officers at the first meeting and wait to elect permanent officers until members know one another better).
- Order or buy food ahead of time so that you can start meals as soon as possible. You may even want to put cooking dinner on the interim work schedule so you have dinner the first night of the contract period.
- Most co-ops have an all day work extravaganza once a term which all members of the co-op participate in. Some co-ops call these work parties or work holidays. Organizing a work party within the first few weeks is a good idea. This would be an excellent opportunity to set a cooperative atmosphere in the house. Besides doing essential cleaning and maintenance repairs, do some highly visual jobs that give the group a sense of ownership and accomplishment (painting, carpet cleaning, painting murals, etc.) Ending the event with a pizza dinner or an in-house party allows member to share their accomplishment and start building their community. Any time after a work party or a similar event would be an opportune time to elect permanent officers.
- If you don't have an in-house party after your work party, have one sometime within the first few weeks of the term so that people can get to know each other. An outing to the local bowling alley, ball park, etc. is also a good community builder.

Member Orientation: The First House Meeting

In addition to the general state of the house, the first house meeting can set the tone for the year as well. The following are some questions that new members have that should be answered at the first house meeting or in a new member handbook. You do not need to go over these questions one by one, but the information does need to be covered.

- How does the meeting process work? Who can call a house meeting?
- How often are house meetings held and how long do they last?
- Are house meetings mandatory?
- When are charges due?
- How much will charges be and how are they set?
- How do I put an item on the house meeting's agenda?
- How are in house conflicts dealt with?
- How/to whom do I report a maintenance problem?
- How is the work schedule decided?
- Are there written job descriptions for house duties?
- Will I ever have to do more than my assigned labor?
- Do I have to clean up someone else's mess?
- Am I responsible for finding someone to do my labor if I am sick or out of town?
- What are the penalties for missed labor?
- Can I smoke in the house, if so where?
- What time are meal served? Is there a way to have a meal saved if I miss dinner?
- How often is meat/vegetarian/vegan option served?
- Are there quiet hours? How are they set? When are they?
- Where can the house constitution/by-laws be found and what do they stipulate?
- How do I become involved in the corporate/house decisions?
- How does the student cooperative movement fit into the larger cooperative movement?
- How was the co-op founded?
- How do I get my phone messages?
- How often may I have a guest? Can they eat here?
- How do we deal with house security?
- How does the dishwasher work? Do I have to rinse my dishes?
- What if I don't like m roommate?
- What if I want out of my contract?
- What is the long distance telephone policy?
- Where can I do my laundry?
- What is this cool organization called NASCO all about?
- Can I have a pet?
- Do we have house parties?
- Can I paint my room? Does the co-op pay for paint (or any other room improvements)?
- Are the bathrooms co-ed?
- Can I run for a house officer position?
- Can I store some of my stuff someplace?
- Is there any furniture available?
- What are the co-op's alcohol/drug policies?
- Is there a TV room policy? Can I reserve the TV for a show?
- Do we get cable? Can we rent movies?

Member Orientation

Even if you have an extensive explanation of how your cooperative works, you need to explain the details of its day to day operation to your new members. Now that the majority of the house has arrived it's time to get the ball rolling.

Member education and orientation is often played down to the disadvantage of many co-ops. Orientation and education includes explaining the work schedule, what a specific duty entails, how house meetings are operated, what responsibilities the members have towards the house and vice versa, etc. Take nothing for granted. Explain as precisely as possible what is expected. Most members will be more than glad to have a complete understanding of their responsibilities. Your members cannot hope to fulfill their responsibilities if they do not have a clear understanding of what the responsibilities entail.

So... here is your opportunity. It's usually a good idea to leave no detail untold. What is obvious or 'old hat' to you is not obvious to the new member. In addition, it's usually a good idea to train everyone to do every job. The co-op system is designed around the principles of democracy: one member one vote. If members are trained in every household job then they are better educated as to the functioning of the house and therefore in better position to effectively govern that house. It also proves useful if members need to switch duties because of time conflicts.

Communicate to your new members in an organized and coherent fashion. If you have time write up a small newsletter from your house to accompany your Owner's Manual. At the beginning of a new year/ term the worst thing you can do is to leave your members in the dark.

Ideas for Orientation

Now that you have a good idea of what kinds of things new members need to know, here are some ideas for the orientation process.

1. Many of the nuts and bolts things, such as smoking areas, quiet hours, etc. need to be brought up at the first house meeting. Other things can wait and be discussed at future meetings or in other ways. Unless quiet hours and other policies are ongoing house rules, it's a good idea to vote on them at the first house meeting so that new members feel more a part of the house decision making process.
2. An Owner's Manual can explain a lot of information to new members about their responsibilities to the house, how the central organization works (if there is one), and what is expected of them.
3. A short presentation by returning members, which includes some games, skits, or other interactive ways of giving information.
4. Having members "adopt" one or two new members each and show them around the house, explaining how things work, and answering questions.

Goals and Objectives

Where are you? And where do you want to be? To make a simple analogy: if you are traveling—you are in one location and ideally you would like to be in another—you PLAN your travel arrangements. Planning for the house is really not that different. Where is your house: financially, with work duties, morale, vacancies, maintenance? What do the members want for the house?

As the coordinating person of your household it is important to assist the house in setting goals, objectives and priorities for the coming term. You too should set your own goals for the position you hold. If vacancies have been a perennial problem then perhaps a suitable goal for the house would be to drop the rate of vacancy from 20% to 10-12%. Your goal as President acting in a resource position for the members, could be to come up with 7-8 specific ways in which vacancy could be minimized.

Other ideas include:

- To improve the nutritional balance of the meals served and/or to add more variety to the meals.
 - A. *Appoint one person to ensure that all meals are nutritionally balanced.*
 - B. *Have a nutritionist speak to the cooks and kitchen steward or the whole house about inexpensive ways to improve the nutritional balance of the menu.*
 - C. *Have every member of the house submit one recipe that is not part of the current menu (and put a moratorium on spaghetti and sir fry for two weeks).*
- To improve the cleanliness of the house.
 - A. *Conduct a training session for new members and explain specifically what their labor includes (cleaning the bathroom includes hand washing the floor, cleaning the mirrors, cleaning the toilet, etc.).*
 - B. *Changing the labor system to include 'supervisors' or 'work bunnies' to thoroughly check specific jobs. Possibly have these jobs rotate among members.*
- To decrease the length of time to fill maintenance requests.
 - A. *Increase the number of people/hours that are assigned to maintenance.*
 - B. *Devise a more effective system to report maintenance.*
- To increase ethnic and racial diversity and/or to balance the gender ratio of the house's membership.
 - A. *Establish why the gender/racial imbalance exists.*
 - B. *Direct advertising and marking toward the desired group.*
- To increase attendance at house meetings from an average of 80% to 90%.
 - A. *Increase the number of house meetings and shorten the length of each one.*
 - B. *Ensure that meetings are fun by assigning a different theme to each one.*
 - C. *Post meeting dates and times well in advance-talk meetings up at meals.*

It is important that you and the rest of the house have realistic expectations about the number of goals and objectives that can be reached and in what time frame. In addition, it is not enough for a house to set goals and objectives for itself; singularly, goals and objectives look like a wish list. However, if they are accompanied by a detailed step by step process that the whole house has participated in creating then the path is laid for your 'journey'. You know where you want to be and you have mapped out how you are going to get there.

President's Calendar

Many of these jobs may be delegated to other officers or members, but it is the Presidents responsibility to see that they happen (this schedule may differ, depending upon your academic schedule).

Month 1

week 1

- Assist new members with move in
- Establish interim work schedule
- Orient/train new members
- First house meeting
 - set date for 'work holiday'
 - elect interim officers

week 2

- Organize and hold a 'work holiday' including post work party
- Elect permanent officers
- Hold a meeting of the house officers
- Establish house operations and regular work schedule
 - maintenance plans for the term
 - set house budget/discuss finances
- Advertise any vacancies, with university housing office, posters, etc.

week 3-4

- Set house goals and objectives for term/year
- Make sure vacant rooms and house are clean to show perspective members
- Organize social events (parties, special dinners, etc.)

Month 2

- If people owe money have them submit a payment plan for approval
- Start encouraging members to attend NASCO Institute
- Advertise to fill vacancies
- Review progress on maintenance projects

Month 3

- NASCO Educational Institute, Ann Arbor, MI
- Mid-term financial reports and budget adjustments
- Mid-term evaluations of house operations. Have an open forum where house members are able to express how they feel about house operations. Discuss the steps that can be taken to improve any specific problems.
- Start to advertise for any vacancies that will occur for January
- Evaluation of progress of house goals/objectives
- Mini-work holiday. Clean, weatherize, etc.

Month 4

- Arrange exam period work schedule, if necessary.
- Continue to advertise for any vacancies.
- Collect keys and forwarding addresses from members who are moving out
- Notify your office or neighbor about the dates the house will be unoccupied.
- Make sure that vacant rooms are clean for new occupants.

Repeat during second term or semester.

House Meetings: The Purpose and Preparation

It's important that house meetings be held on a regular basis, every two weeks is pretty standard. Cooperatives are based on the principle of one member, one vote. For members to be the real decision makers in a house, frequent, well run meetings are essential. As president you're responsible for calling and coordinating meetings, and ensuring that your house is run democratically. When you start feeling like you'd rather run barefoot over razor blades than call a house meeting, remember the purpose of house meetings:

- To act as a forum to make democratic decisions about the house by its members. This includes resolving problems and making policy decisions.
- To keep house members informed about house operations, finances, and business through regular house officer reports. Educate house members to empower them to make informed decisions.
- To discuss relevant and current issues of the central organization and have a solid understanding of the basic operations of the corporate level.
- To build house unity and community.

The agenda announcing a house meeting should be conspicuously posted at least 48 hours before the meeting. Some co-ops set the dates of house meetings at the beginning of each term varying the day to ensure all are able to attend. The dates are agreed upon by the house and then are posted well in advance. The president (here's where you come in) should draw up the agenda with the input of other house officers and members. There is a sample agenda drawn up on page 14. It is a good idea to estimate how long items will take to cover and then you will be able to estimate the total length of the meeting. Many houses start off the meeting with an icebreaker. This is a fun way to get your members into the meeting frame of mind while reducing tension.

The next item on the agenda should be officer reports. Every officer should report to the house on the status of their area at this time; the president covers house issues and other pertinent news, the treasurer should give a financial report (including who has not paid), stewards should give reports about the food situation, the board representative should talk about corporate issues, and the work manager should report on the status of work done and not done. Members should also be allowed to question and make constructive suggestions to the officers at this time. If for any reason one or more of the house officers cannot be present they should submit their report to the president in advance so the house will have the opportunity to be up to date in all areas of house business. After members are briefed by the officers, the meeting should move on to consider any current problems or proposed policy decisions. List these agenda items in a way that will make it clear when reading the agenda what items will be discussed. When making up the agenda, the president should leave time for new business; this time is set aside to discuss issues that result from the meeting itself. The last item of every agenda, however brief, should be an oral evaluation by the group of the meeting.

A final tip on setting agendas is be creative! Some presidents have written agendas on bathroom mirrors with lip stick or on toilet paper and posted the TP on the front door. You need to keep a copy of the agenda for the house records-this ideally would be a regular sheet of paper, typed. Some successful meetings have been run as pajama parties and others as wine and cheese cotillions. Some larger co-ops have had meetings over candle light dinners while others have run meetings as game shows. Use your imagination-and certainly don't forget to tap into the imagination of other house members.

House Meetings: The Process

As house president you will probably be the facilitator of house meetings (although it's OK to rotate facilitation). The facilitator's job is to help the group reach a decision efficiently. If the facilitator is arguing in favor of one side, s/he may lose the confidence of the members on the opposing side. A facilitator may also be able to have more influence on opinions because of his/her authority position. Because of this s/he should remain neutral, at least outwardly. If the president feels that s/he must contribute to a debate on an issue s/he may surrender the chair to someone who is able to remain impartial while this issue is being considered. For extremely emotional, controversial, or potentially heated meetings, such as an expulsion meetings, it is generally a good idea to call in an outside facilitator.

When conducting a meeting, it is the facilitator's responsibility to ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak. When a group is trying to make a decision, it is important that all points of view be heard. In order to achieve this, you, as the facilitator may have to cut off some people and encourage some quiet members to express themselves. One method that is particularly useful in soliciting each members opinion is to hold a 'round robin' (Going through the group and letting each member speak their mind on the issue for 15 to 20 seconds). Round robins can be especially effective on controversial issues because everyone gets a chance to express themselves while a sense of how the group feels collectively is brought out in the open.

The Four Roles of a Facilitator

Process...insures that a group follows its own process.

- Make sure maintenance functions are filled.
- Make sure each agenda item has a sponsor at the meeting.
- Clarify status and desired outcome for each agenda item.
- Clarify motions before they are voted/consented upon. Have the minutes taker read a motion before the group takes action on it.

Time...keeps group conscious of time factors.

- Periodically summarize the discussion
- Take responsibility for making process suggestions for the group to reject or accept
- Take responsibility for keeping a discussion relevant

Direction...assists the group in analysis, lending direction where possible.

- Show appreciation to group and to individuals for progress or accomplishments.
- Keep the group from focusing entirely on details.

Empowerment...empowers the group as a whole, working to prevent any attempt to overpower the group.

- Draw reticent people into the meeting
- Check in with group often; be sensitive to group dynamics.
- Learn to recognize comments as hidden proposals.

House Meetings: Procedures

Basic Parliamentary Principles

1. Only one subject may claim the attention of the group at a time.
2. Each proposition presented for consideration is entitled to full and free debate.
3. Every member has rights equal to every other member.
4. The will of the majority must be carried out, the rights of the minority must be preserved.
5. The personality and desires of each member should be merged into the larger unit of the organization.

Motions The proper way for an individual to propose that the group take a certain action is by making a motion. The following is the process for handling a motion.

1. A member addresses the chair for recognition, is recognized by the chair, and proposes a motion.
2. Another member must second the motion.
3. The chair states the motion to the group.
4. The group can ask clarifying questions about the motion.
5. The group can now discuss or debate the motion. Only one person at a time may speak. They first must be recognized by the chair.
6. The chair takes the vote on the motion. Voting can be done by voice, show of hands, or ballot.
7. The chair announces the result and the floor is open for another motion.

It is important to note that once a motion has been made, it belongs to the group as a whole, not the just the sponsor.

Amendments

1. Any member of the group may propose an amendment to a motion.
2. An amendment is "friendly" if no one in the group has a major problem with it.
3. If an amendment is "friendly", there is no need to discuss or vote on it and it automatically becomes part of the motion. Discussion on the motion resumes.
4. If an amendment is not "friendly", discussion moves from the motion to the amendment and follows the same process as the above process for a motion. After a vote has been taken, the discussion on the original motion resumes.
5. The group's discussion must stay on whatever issue is on the floor, whether it be a motion, an amendment, or an amendment to an amendment. This can be difficult for the facilitator and the group if the group gets too bogged down in process.
6. Any amendment that drastically changes the content of the original proposal is also lutely unacceptable and should be ruled out of order by the facilitator. The group should not even discuss such an amendment. An example might be if one person proposes that the living room be painted white and someone tries to make an amend ment that the color be blue. In this case the facilitator should tell the amender that the amendment is unacceptable and that if people dislike the proposal, they should vote against it rather than amend it. A safe rule for amendments is that they should improve rather than change a proposal.

Preference to Speak

1. A member who has not yet spoken to the motion
2. A member who seldom speaks before one who frequently addresses the assembly.
3. The chair should try to alternate between those favoring and those opposing the motion
4. Points of information or process points take precedence over regular discussion.

House Meetings: Facilitation Tips

Meeting Facilitation Tips

You know the difference between a good house meeting and a bad one, you know it intuitively by the sensation you feel when leaving a house meeting. You feel nothing was accomplished, angry at your house-mates, confused about issues raised at the meeting, powerless to make any changes in the co-op, and (in general) as though you wasted an hour (or two, three...) Here are a few tips to keep in mind when you go about facilitating a meeting:

1. At the beginning of a meeting point out meeting process areas that the group needs to work on and ask them to be conscious of those areas throughout the meeting.
2. Use and stick to a speakers' list (queue, stack, etc.)
3. Summarize and clarify issues.
4. Search out areas of agreement and confront conflict.
5. Maintain a supportive climate.
6. Keep from personalizing issues and positions.
7. Recognize and accommodate concerns.
8. Address group needs, not personal needs.
9. Post the agenda on the wall so that you and other group members can refer to it.
10. Tack up "questions" and "discussion" signs during those parts of a proposal so that everyone in the group knows where you are in the process, and if a group member gets off track, you can easily point out what they should be talking about.

Dealing with Interruptions

Almost inevitably there is at least one person in every group that speaks out of turn, interrupts others, is longwinded, gives irrelevant information, dominates discussion, or gets off the topic. In most cases the culprit does these things unintentionally, however, it is still inappropriate meeting behavior and needs to be stopped. Keep in mind that such behavior is rude, whether intentional or not, and may be dealt with accordingly. Below are some suggestions.

1. Let the group know at the beginning of the meeting that there have been problems with interruptions, longwindedness, etc. and that you will cut people off if necessary (if you say you're going to do it you need to make sure that you do).
2. Have a rule that when the facilitator raises her/his hand everyone else must do the same thing, and when your hand is up, your mouth should be closed.
3. Have an object that is passed from speaker to speaker with the understanding that no one except the facilitator may speak without holding it
4. Limit comments to 1 minute (or whatever amount of time you think is appropriate).
5. "Does anyone have any new information or a new opinion to give?"
6. "We've heard from you does anyone else have something to add?"
7. "Are there any other points of view in the group?"
8. "The topic we are discussing is labor fines (or whatever it is), could you please restrict your comments to that issue?"

Sample House Meeting Agenda

Total Time approximately 1 hour, 40 minutes

1. Call meeting to order
2. Icebreaker /check in (5-6 minutes)
3. Accept minutes of previous meeting (with any amendments) (3 minutes)
4. Accept agenda (with any amendments) (3-5 minutes)
5. Officer Reports (25 minutes total)
 - a. House Manager (4-5 minutes)
 - who has missed labor
 - labor schedule changes etc.
 - food budget report
 - types of food being purchased
 - b. Kitchen Steward (4-5 minutes)
 - food budget report
 - types of food being purchased
 - c. Treasurer (4-5 minutes)
 - any current bills
 - who is outstanding in charges
 - over/under budget
 - d. Social/Education (4-5 minutes)
 - when parties are/cost/education events
 - e. Maintenance (4-5 minutes)
 - report on work done
 - priority of to do's
 - f. President (4-5 minutes)
 - what's going on at the corporate level
 - report on any house officer meetings
 - mention any concerns regarding the outside community, neighborhood
6. Newspaper Subscription (10-12 minutes)
 - NY Times/Boarder Town Times
7. Discussion of Vegetarian/Vegan option (15-20 minutes)
8. House Cleanliness Problems (10-15 minutes)
 - brainstorming for solutions
9. Discussion of quiet hours (10-15 minutes)
 - use of stereos/parties etc.
10. Evaluations (10 minutes)
11. Adjourn

Sample House Meeting Evaluation

It is a good idea to orally evaluate every meeting at its closing, but you might also consider anonymous written evaluations of the meeting process a couple of times a semester. This will provide the membership with a forum to vent any frustrations and/or suggestions and give you, the facilitator, an opportunity to learn from this feedback. The following is intended to be a sample written meeting evaluation form - you should add to this and delete as necessary.

House Meeting Evaluation Form

Please do not put your name on this form. Please grade each statement using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree

Feel free to make any comments on the other side of the paper.

1. House meetings are held too frequently.
1 2 3 4 5
2. House meetings should be held once a week but that the length of each meeting be shortened.
1 2 3 4 5
3. There is a lot of inter-personal conflict during house meetings.
1 2 3 4 5
- 4) House officers keep the membership up to date in their respective areas.
1 2 3 4 5
- 5) The facilitator personalizes issues and/or does not remain neutral during discussions.
1 2 3 4 5
- 6) The facilitator doesn't keep control of the meeting and allows members to interrupt one another and for discussion to go off topic.
1 2 3 4 5
- 7) Most of the house members are attentive and are listening to the issues.
1 2 3 4 5
- 8) Generally house meetings are well run and enjoyable to attend.
1 2 3 4 5
- 9) House meetings are important to keep the house running smoothly.
1 2 3 4 5
- 10) I feel free to give my opinions in house meetings.
1 2 3 4 5
- 11) Important information is shared at house meetings.
1 2 3 4 5

Leadership Development

To counter problems in leadership for a co-op house or system an activist stance must be taken by existing leaders to nurture and train future leaders. Needed changes are often structural within the co-op's organization. While addressing the structure can seem intimidating, the benefits can be tremendous and inaction can be deadly. Methods of filling the leadership gap fall under four categories.

1) Begin encouragement - Day 1

The first thing many members think when they move in is "what a mess!" If you already have a sign up asking for suggestions for things that need doing on work holiday the first weekend, new members can have an impact on house operation right from the start. Hold elections early. Have at least a few, relatively easy positions, which are customarily filled by new eager beavers. Even if its something like outdoor caretaker, or pop machine steward, just winning an election is enough to keep someone's interest long enough to bring them along to the next stop. Believe it or not, creating more leadership positions can generate better people for the more crucial positions.

2) Identify enthusiasm and make it grow.

Tell at least two people twice a week that they are doing something right. When election time approaches, approach house members beforehand and tell them you think they would be really good in any of two or three jobs. Don't ever discourage someone except under extreme circumstances.

3) Make leadership desirable and fun.

Make house leadership roles rewarding. Tell people they are doing a good job. Try to seem enthusiastic about your position. If people see that leadership is hectic and full of woe, they won't want to be leaders. Don't let leaders take on more responsibility than they can handle. Make meetings fun and short. Help meeting participant to turn ideas into proposals and into reality. Keep relations between leaders and co-workers smooth.

4) Shrink need for nurturing.

Make the terms of position longer. Eliminate needless committees. Give more authority, cautiously, to individuals. Most important delegate. No member should take on more than their share of labor or responsibility. This often happens because people believe that a task will not get done unless they do it. What the end result is that they are relied upon to do it. When labor and responsibility are concentrated - leadership development decreases.

Volunteer Motivation and Management

Once a member has joined a co-op they have become a 'volunteer' of sorts. While every member has a set number of labor hours or credit to fulfill, the organization depends on some contributing more than they are asked. Not only do you need someone to make dinner and clean the bathroom, you also need someone to be treasurer, kitchen steward, and maintenance manger. It is these positions that demand more time than others from members. Traditional methods of motivation such as money, or promotion, or on the negative side firing, are not options open to us within cooperative systems.

Some people may have become members of your co-op for reasons of social conscience. It may be a concern about democratically controlling their living environment that motivated them. Others may have joined for reasons of self-fulfillment or in social science terminology 'self actualization'. More often than not these two reason overlap; the desire to contribute to a movement you believe in and help yourself are two compelling reasons to join a co-op. Most co-ops and credit unions place emphasis on self-help. Becoming a member is hands on working experience and volunteering (the extra commitment of house or corporate officers) means helping others as well as yourself.

It is important to keep volunteer motivation in mind as you strive to build leadership within your house. The following are some ways to develop leadership and to give positive reinforcement to fellow officers and members showing an interest in leadership positions.

1. Make leadership look like fun.
2. Provide leaders and potential leaders with in information and training they need to get the job done. If someone volunteers for a job, try to ensure that it isn't a totally frustrating experience.
3. Tell people when they are doing a good job; either recognize them publicly at a house meting or through a house newsletter, or one on one. People will stop going above and beyond the call of duty if they feel no one has noticed their efforts.
4. Provide people with the assistance they need. It is not beneficial to the house or the individual if a leader becomes a martyr.
5. When a member tells you "we really should do..." enlist their help for the project.
6. Keep in mind that everyone likes to be needed, and approach people that way.

The Team Approach: In House Committees

While house officer positions are often quite rewarding and challenging house jobs, there is also a high potential for burn out. In order for you to get the most out of your officer position and keep things running smoothly, it's important that you meet regularly with all other officers. These house officers can make sure that they are working as a cohesive group for a common goal(s). This is an excellent place to start formulating goals and objectives for the upcoming year. Brainstorm with this group and then take some of your ideas to the house.

Many problems that come up in the house tend to fall under the domain of more than one officer, cooperation among officers in finding solutions is essential. You can meet over dinner or at a regular happy hour. Regardless of where you meet, the key to success is to meet regularly so the channels of communication stay open, while an effective peer support group is maintained. It is imperative that if house officers meet together, it is as a committee or a problem solving group. If house members feel that officers are trying to run the house and control too much, house members will feel alienated and disenfranchised.

As it is important for you to set goals as president and for the house to set collective goals, it is equally important for other house officers to set their own goals. Maybe the Social/Education Director would like to have three social events and two educational events this term. The kitchen steward could set the goal of not serving any one dish more than two or three time a term. You get the idea. If each of the officers have a goal and they share it with other officers and members, they have a goal to work for. They have set expectations by which they can be evaluated.

Many co-op houses, especially larger ones, often use in-house committees as a way to get more members involved, take some pressure off of the officers, make decisions without bringing every issue to the whole house, and develop new leaders. In some cases all members may be required to spend a certain amount of time doing committee work, whereas in other cases committee work may be just one option for fulfilling labor credit within the house.

Some common in-house committees and their functions are:

- *Social/Education Committee:* Plans, carries out, and promotes social and educational events for the house, and promotes organization wide events.
- *Kitchen Committee:* Sees to the organization, safety, and cleanliness of the kitchen. Orders new kitchen equipment and works with the menu planner and food buyer.
- *Labor Committee:* Sets fines and make up work for missed labor, decides amount of credit for each labor position and works with work manager/labor czar.
- *Judicial Committee:* Deals with in-house conflicts, potential expulsion issues, etc. Makes recommendations to the house.
- *Finance Committee:* Develops, monitors and adjusts budget. Reviews debt situations.
- *House Council:* Committee of the officers, generally open to all member, to discuss house business.

Standards of Legal Liability

The president and all house officers have a legal responsibility to be aware of the bylaws, house constitution, and/or standing rules. The first house officer's meeting is an excellent time to go over the by-laws and discuss the implication these have on the operations of the house. If you ever feel concerned about the legal position you are in, you should contact your staff (if you have any) and your corporate Board of Directors and, if deemed necessary, legal council.

This is of particular importance for single house systems.

Prudent Person Standard A house officer is expected to exercise the same care in carrying out his or her duties as a prudent and reasonable person would in similar circumstances. The level of care is usually that which an individual would be expected to show in the conduct of his or her own personal affairs.

Ordinary Skill and Intelligence Standard An officer/director is expected to exercise at least ordinary skill and act with reasonable intelligence in the exercise of his/her duties.

Best interest standard An officer/director is always expected to act in the best interest of the cooperative.

Most Frequent Charges Against Directors/Officers:

Mismanagement In general, directors/officers are not liable for good faith management provided that they obey the law, and act within the cooperatives by-laws, and do not neglect Board duties. Directors may not delegate responsibility to other agents, including staff. Sometimes officers/directors may be called upon to account for the actions or subordinated even if not aware of the questionable actions at the time they occurred.

Misconduct Directors/officers are guilty of misconduct when they together or in groups take action not authorized by the bylaws or is prohibited by law. Examples include...

- Failure to file financial reports
- Filing of false reports
- Making unauthorized loans
- Utilization of powers of directorship for personal gain
- Authorization of activities contrary to bylaws

Fraud misrepresentation, negligence Directors/officers may also commit misconduct when they fail to live up to the general standard of honesty and non-negligence with the membership or general public.

For these and other reasons it is vital to keep accurate and clear records of all meetings and decisions. Minutes should indicate dissent on any and all decisions.

Presidential Crisis

With all the pressures of school and your presidency, at least once you will be faced by a presidential crisis. Remember to utilize your house officers -enlist them and others to assist you when possible. While it maybe your job to coordinate the house and to deal with conflict, it is not your sole responsibility to ensure the smooth running of the house. Take a deep breath and face the problem head on!

Communication:

Communication, or the lack there of, is often a key component in conflicts. Many times a conflict arises because one or more people felt they were misunderstood or didn't understand what someone else said. Conflict also arises when members of a group of people have different expectations of the situation. Some ways to help keep conflicts from occurring are:

1. Have people discuss their expectations coming into the co-op. For example, are members anticipating a strong social bond? How do they feel about individual drug and alcohol use? What levels of cleanliness do they expect?
2. Try to focus on goals and expectations that the group holds in common. Try to reach an agreement on areas where people differ strongly.
3. Discuss positive communication techniques such as active listening and owning your own feelings. Encourage members to use these techniques in house meetings and in any potential conflict situation.
4. Encourage members to confront and deal with conflicts and disagreements positively, rather than to talk about other members behind their backs.
5. Make policies that the group agrees on for handling conflicts and potential conflicts.

Effective Listening Techniques

1. Stop talking.
2. Ask questions when you don't understand.
3. Be patient; give the other person time to say what they have to say.
4. Concentrate, focus on the words, ideas, and feelings related to the subject
5. Look at the other person.
6. Leave your emotions behind if you can.
7. Get rid of distractions.
8. Get the main points.
9. Share the responsibility of communication, only part of the responsibility rests with the speaker
10. React to idas, not to the person. Don't let your feelings about the person influence your interpretation of what s/he says.
11. Don't argue mentally, this keeps you from really listening.
12. Listen to how something is said, attitudes and emotions may be more important than words.
13. Don't antagonize the speaker, too often we classify people as certain types and then try to fit everything they say into pigeon holes.
14. Recognize your own prejudices.
15. Keep in mind that the initial issues brought up are not in the issues really involved in a dispute.

Conflict Resolution

When Conflict Occurs:

Unfortunately, there is no way that we can give you all the tools to deal with a conflict situation in a few pages in a manual, but we can give you a few things to keep in mind. In addition to the ideas below that may help you in dealing with conflict between you and another person or between other members of your house, we suggest that your co-op offers some sort of conflict management workshop. Some co-ops offer peer counseling or mediation services to deal with conflicts between members or in a house. When trying to live together in a community, programs like that are quite helpful.

1. The more emotionally invested one becomes in a discussion, the easier it is to stop trying to communicate.
2. When someone is upset, knowing that their listener understands what they are saying and empathizes (this is very different from sympathizes) with them can have a very calming effect and is often the first step towards conflict resolution. Some empathy statements are: "You sound angry", "You sound frustrated", etc.
3. Make sure that you understand what the other person is saying, and let them know that you do, by saying "I hear you saying..."
4. Clarify what is going on by asking for more information allowing the speaker to tell his or her story. "What bothers you the most about this situation?" or "what do you want people to understand that they don't understand right now?"
6. Summarize what you have heard to let the person know that you really have been listening and understanding. "So far you have been saying to me.." or "the three main points you have been making are... Is there anything that I have missed?"

Often a house president finds her/himself in the position of being a mediator. If someone has poor communication skills, or is biased about the situation, having them mediate a conflict could just aggravate the situation. We generally recommend finding an outside facilitator or mediator to deal with serious in house conflicts, but in case you find yourself in the position of mediator, the following are some ways to facilitate resolution:

- When people understand the conflict and agree to work on its solution, you might say, "You seem to understand the conflict and each other, now lets work on an agreement you can both accept"
- Focus on areas of definite agreement first: "it seems to me that you have both agreed that you want the constant fighting to stop."
- Ask which issue or concern is most important.
- Focus on one issue at a time, in order of importance.
- Save your suggestions until the parties have stated their own first.
- Check out possible resolutions with each party.
- Remind people of their common interests when appropriate.
- Ask each person what he or she thinks would be a fair resolution to each issue.
- Ask questions and use other active listening techniques to help them work out an agreement.
- Summarize all the points of agreement. Ask each party if the solution is reasonable and workable. If there is disagreement, work it through.
- Write down the details of the agreement and have both parties sign a copy.

Presidential Crisis

Harassment, whether it be based on gender, race, sexual preference, religion, etc., is an all too common phenomena in student co-ops, and can be one of the most controversial and painful issues for a house to face. It is important for a house to take preventive measures against harassment and to have policies to deal with it should it occur.

Definition

The following definition and examples were used by a group of members who were concerned about harassment in the Inter-Cooperative Council in Ann Arbor. Although the definition is for sexual harassment, the general concepts can be applied towards any type of harassment by substituting words referring specifically to sexism to words that refer to racism or other bigotry. Remember that this is only one definition and is not the "right" or "only" one. Harassment is certainly not limited to these concepts.

"Gender based or sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual attention a person receives. By 'sexual attention' we mean attention based on a person's gender or sexuality. The term sexual harassment encompasses a range of behaviors from remarks to sexual assault. It is important to understand that actions need not be malicious in intent in order to constitute sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- Sexist or homophobic remarks and behavior that create an uncomfortable, hostile, offensive, or intimidating atmosphere.
- Unwelcome or irrelevant comments, gestures, intrusive questioning or other forms of personal attention which may be perceived as sexual overtures or denigration.
- Unwanted advances including sexual propositions, touching, patting, tickling, kissing, grabbing or any other invasion of personal space.
- Advances of the type mentioned above with threatened or implied sanctions, including physical or emotional violence, loss of job security or public humiliation.
- Assault - any sexual intimacy that is uninvited, accompanied or not by physical force."

Prevention

A primary tool against harassment is education, including education about groups that might be victims of harassment, such as gays/lesbians and people of color, and education about the types of behavior that might be offensive to other house members. Often people don't understand that their behavior is offensive to another person, and are willing to change it once they have been educated. Most college campuses have groups that present workshops dealing with sexual harassment and assault, differences in cultural backgrounds, homophobia, etc. We highly recommend using the resources available in your community to educate your house on such issues. One problem with workshops such as these is that many times the people who most need the education, don't attend. However, not having a workshop in your house sends a certain message to all members, whether they attend or not.

Harassment

Being open from day one about what types of behavior are acceptable and unacceptable, as well as the process for dealing with, and the consequences of, uncooperative behavior can help prevent harassment. An environment hostile to harassment could make a potential harasser think twice about their behavior, whereas an environment open to bigoted and aggressive behavior might encourage some people to behave in ways they normally would not.

Confronting Harassment

It is extremely important that your co-op have a policy dealing with harassment and other forms of uncooperative behavior before it happens. If you wait until a situation arises before coming up with a policy, your policy could be oriented more towards the individual situation rather than the whole issue. In addition, such issues are quite emotional and controversial and writing a policy while dealing with the problem will just be an added stress. NASCO has copies of policies from various co-ops available for you to use as samples.

If harassment occurs in your house, provide a supportive environment for the complainant. Other people in the house need to speak out against harassing behavior. If a man is telling offensive and sexist jokes to women, other men in the house should tell him that is inappropriate. Unfortunately, if only the complainant speaks up, charges of harassment are not always taken seriously. This is not to say that it takes others to validate one person's personal experience.

Termination of Membership

As stated above in the harassment section, it is important that your co-op have a policy to deal with member expulsion before it occurs. The following are some areas that should be covered in your policy. As always, consult your local, state/province, and federal laws pertaining to this issue.

1. Grounds upon which a member can be expelled.
2. Who can call for an expulsion hearing.
3. How far in advance the meeting should be scheduled.
4. Quorum.
5. Percentage of house needed to pass an expulsion vote.
6. Confidentiality.
7. Amount of time the person has to move out if expelled.
8. Who is responsible for house charges if the person is expelled.
9. Process in case the person chooses not to attend the expulsion hearing.
10. Appeals.
11. Alternatives to membership termination.

Presidential Crisis: Termination of Membership

No matter what someone may have done to bring about an expulsion hearing, the process should be as fair as possible. If the expulsion process is questionable the person being expelled could sue the co-op. Some recommendations for an expulsion hearing process:

1. Have an outside, neutral facilitator. You, as house president, or other members of the house are most likely too closely involved to be an objective facilitator.
2. Either you or someone else in the house should talk to the person in question before the notice of the hearing is posted. In most cases the person already knows what is going on, but you don't want someone to find out about their expulsion hearing by looking at the house bulletin board.
3. Ground rules for the hearing should be set at the beginning of the meeting and have everyone agree to them. If people do not adhere to the agreed upon ground rules, they may be asked to leave. This includes the person the meeting is about.
4. The charges for the expulsion should be read and explained. Make sure people know what rule(s) of the house were violated. People can ask clarifying questions about the rule(s).
5. The person in question has the opportunity to respond to the charges. If there are many charges, you might want to read them one by one and let the person respond to each one as it is read, to avoid confusion.
6. Members of the house can ask the person questions.
7. After the person has had the opportunity to say what they wanted and other members have asked their questions, the person may be asked to leave the room while the issue is discussed. Some people feel that it is unfair to make the person leave the room, that they should hear what people have to say about them. However, other members might feel intimidated speaking up against the person while they are in the room.
8. The person needs to have the chance to respond to any charges against them, so if they are asked to leave the room, no more charges may be brought up. This includes examples of behavior pertaining to charges already brought up.
9. When the vote is taken, it should be by secret ballot.