

Long-Range Planning Community Engagement Committee

Guidelines and Application Process

This page outlines the expectations, responsibilities, authority, time commitment, and selection process for individuals interested in serving on the Long-Range Planning Community Engagement Committee.

Applicants are encouraged to review these guidelines before applying.

Committee Purpose

The Community Engagement Committee will lead the Co-op's community engagement process in support of the development of a new Long-Range Plan.

Its responsibility is to create meaningful ways for member-owners, staff, customers, and the broader community to learn about the opportunities and challenges facing the Co-op and to share their perspectives, ideas, concerns, and hopes for the future.

The Committee will then organize what it hears and share those findings with the General Manager, operations team, and Board of Directors.

The General Manager and operations team are responsible for developing the Long-Range Plan.

Committee Authority

The Committee has authority to develop and carry out the community engagement process.

This includes authority to make decisions about:

- the methods used to gather community input;
- the audiences and stakeholder groups the Committee seeks to hear from;
- the format and structure of engagement activities;
- how the information gathered is organized and reviewed; and
- how findings are presented to the General Manager and Board of Directors.

The Committee will work collaboratively with Co-op staff when its work requires communications, logistics, operational support, or other assistance.

The Committee does **not** have authority to determine what is ultimately included in the Long-Range Plan.

Its role is to conduct the engagement process and communicate what was heard clearly and accurately so that community input can inform the planning process.

Committee Composition

The Committee will include:

- Co-op Board members;
- the General Manager; and
- four individuals selected through this application process.

One of the four available seats is designated for a current Co-op staff member.

The other seats may be filled by member-owners or other members of the broader community.

Co-op membership is encouraged but is not required to apply.

Responsibilities of Committee Members

Committee members should be prepared to participate actively throughout the approximately eight-month process.

Responsibilities will include:

- participating in orientation and learning about the Co-op's current opportunities and challenges;
- reviewing relevant background information and prior planning work;
- helping design a thoughtful and inclusive community engagement process;
- identifying stakeholder groups and communities the Co-op should seek to hear from;
- helping plan and conduct engagement activities;
- listening carefully to a wide range of perspectives;
- contributing to the review and organization of information gathered;
- helping identify themes, areas of agreement, and differing perspectives;
- contributing to the development of final findings and materials; and
- working collaboratively with fellow Committee members, the General Manager, Board members, staff, and the supporting consultant.

Committee members are expected to approach the work with curiosity, openness, and respect for perspectives that may differ from their own.

Three Phases of Work

The Committee's work will take place in three main phases.

1. Preparation and Orientation

Early in the process, the Committee will develop a shared understanding of the work already completed by the Board and General Manager, the opportunities and challenges facing the Co-op, and the purpose of the Long-Range Plan.

The Committee will then develop its community engagement approach with initial guidance from the Board's Steering Committee and support from a consultant.

2. Community Engagement

The Committee will design and conduct a robust community engagement process.

Possible engagement methods include:

- listening sessions;
- focus groups;
- surveys;
- town halls; and
- other approaches developed by the Committee.

The Committee will seek to hear from a broad and diverse range of people connected to the Co-op and the greater Middlebury region.

The process should be inclusive, thoughtful, strategic, make room for nuance, and make good use of participants' time.

3. Reviewing and Sharing Findings

After engagement activities are complete, the Committee will review and organize the information gathered.

The Committee will determine the most useful format for sharing its findings with the General Manager and Board of Directors.

Final materials may include:

- a summary of the engagement process;
- major themes and insights;
- areas of broad agreement;
- areas where differing perspectives emerged;
- Committee reflections;
- possible next steps or areas for additional work; and
- public-facing materials summarizing what was heard.

A more detailed report for the General Manager and Board may also be developed.

Relationship to the General Manager, Board, Staff, and Consultant

The Committee is one part of the broader Long-Range Planning process.

The **General Manager and operations team** are responsible for developing the Long-Range Plan.

The **Board of Directors** maintains its governance responsibilities and will receive the Committee's findings as part of the broader planning process.

The **Community Engagement Committee** is responsible for developing and conducting the engagement process and sharing what it learns.

Relevant **Co-op staff** will support areas of the Committee's work that require communications, logistics, operational support, or other assistance.

A **consultant** will support the Committee throughout the approximately eight-month process.

Time Commitment

The Committee is expected to work from approximately **November 2026 through June 2027**.

Committee members should expect:

- approximately two meetings per month;
- meetings of roughly 60 to 90 minutes;
- some work between meetings; and
- a greater time commitment during the primary community engagement period.

The most active engagement period is expected to occur during **March and April 2027**.

Meeting times will be based on the availability of the group. Weekdays, weekday evenings, and weekends may all be considered.

Meetings will likely take place remotely using Zoom.

The Committee may be reevaluated in May 2027, with the possibility of continuing its work if additional engagement or follow-up is needed.

Compensation

Individuals selected through this application process who are not members of the Board of Directors will be offered a **\$600 stipend** in recognition of their time and effort.

The stipend will be divided into two payments:

- one near the beginning of the Committee's work; and
- one upon completion of the Committee's work.

Board members serving on the Committee will be offered compensation consistent with the Board's policy regarding stipends for committee work.

What the Steering Committee Will Consider

There are no special professional qualifications required to serve.

The Board's Steering Committee will select applicants with the goal of creating a group that collectively brings a broad range of skills, experiences, perspectives, and community connections.

The Steering Committee may consider qualities such as:

- commitment to the Co-op and its long-term success;
- strong listening skills;
- ability to collaborate and build consensus;
- facilitation experience;
- conflict mediation experience;
- creative thinking;
- comfort speaking with groups;
- experience gathering or analyzing qualitative information;
- Co-op member-owner experience;
- Co-op staff experience;
- perspectives from younger community members;
- perspectives from elders;
- perspectives from BIPOC/Global Majority community members;
- perspectives from LGBTQIA+ community members;
- connection to or experience within the Addison County food system;
- lived experience with limited income or experience with food security resources and support;
- connection with the Middlebury business community;
- connection with the Middlebury College community;
- experience as a long-time Addison County resident; and
- experience as a newer Addison County resident.

This list is not exhaustive, and no applicant is expected to bring all or most of these qualities.

Selection will be based on what each applicant may contribute to the Committee as a whole.

Application and Selection Process

The application will include a short set of questions asking applicants to describe:

- why they are interested in serving;
- what they believe they would bring to the Committee; and
- relevant skills, experiences, perspectives, and community connections.

[Applications may be submitted online](#). Paper applications will also be available at the Co-op's Customer Service Desk.

Application deadline: October 3, 2026

After the deadline, all applications will be reviewed by the Board of Directors' Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will select four applicants, including one current Co-op staff member.

All applicants will be notified of the Steering Committee's decisions by **October 16, 2026**.

Before You Apply

By applying, you are expressing your interest in helping design and carry out the Co-op's community engagement process from approximately November 2026 through June 2027.

Serving on the Committee is different from simply sharing your own views about the Co-op's future. Committee members will help create the process through which many people can participate and be heard.

There will be additional opportunities for member-owners, staff, customers, and community members to share input as the engagement process moves forward.

[Apply for the Long-Range Planning Community Engagement Committee](#)