



Board Policies

Policy Type: Ends

Policy Title: A - Ends

Last Revised: June 20, 2024

Natural Harvest exists so that...

1. A broad region of shoppers is connected to the strengths, inclusiveness, and relationships of our thriving local economy.
2. Community members are aware of local health and wellness opportunities.
3. People in our area have access to healthy food, products, and resources.
4. Our area shoppers have access to a network of producers that help sustain a regional food system.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B - Global Executive Constraint

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

The General Manager must not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is unlawful, imprudent, or in violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics and practice, or in violation of the Cooperative Principles. The board specifically prohibits the practice of nepotism.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: BI - Financial Condition and Activities

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

With respect to the actual, ongoing financial conditions and activities, the General Manager must not cause or allow the Cooperative to be unprepared for future opportunities, the development of fiscal jeopardy, or key operational indicators to be below average for our industry.

The GM must not

1. Allow sales growth to be inadequate.
2. Allow operations to generate an inadequate net income.
3. Allow liquidity (the ability to meet cash needs in a timely and efficient fashion) to be insufficient.
4. Allow solvency (the relationship of debt to equity) to be insufficient.
5. Allow growth in ownership and owner equity to be insufficient.
6. Default on any terms that are part of the Cooperative's loans.
7. Allow late payment of contracts, payroll, loans or other financial obligations.
8. Incur debt other than trade payables or other reasonable and customary liabilities incurred in the ordinary course of doing business.
9. Acquire, encumber or dispose of real estate.
10. Allow tax payments or other government-ordered payments or filings to be overdue or inaccurately filed.
11. Use restricted funds for any purpose other than that required by the restriction.
12. Allow financial record keeping systems to be inadequate or out of conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAPb).



Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B2 - Business Planning & Financial Budgeting

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

The General Manager shall not cause or allow business planning and budgeting to deviate from the Board's Ends priorities, risk financial jeopardy or fail to be derived from a multiyear plan.

The GM must not:

1. Create plans or budgets that:
 - a. Risk incurring those situations or conditions described as unacceptable in the Board policy "Financial Condition and Activities."
 - b. Omit credible projection of revenues and expenses, owner investment and return, separation of capital and operational items, cash flow, and disclosure of planning assumptions.
 - c. Have not been tested for feasibility.
2. Provide less for Board prerogatives during the year than is set forth in the board budget.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B3 - Asset Protection

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

The General Manager must not allow assets to be unprotected, unreasonably risked, or inadequately maintained.

The GM must not:

1. Allow equipment and facilities to be inadequately insured or otherwise unable to be replaced if damaged or destroyed, including coverage for any losses incurred due to business interruption.
2. Allow unnecessary exposure to liability or lack of insurance protection from claims of liability.
3. Allow deposits or investments to be unreasonably risked.
4. Allow inadequate security of premises and property.
5. Allow data, intellectual property, or files to be unprotected from loss, theft or significant damage.
 - a. Allow improper usage of members' and customers' personal information.
6. Allow purchasing that is uncontrolled or subject to conflicts of interest.
7. Allow lack of due diligence in contracts.
8. Allow damage to the Cooperative's public image.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B4 - Membership Rights & Responsibilities

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

The General Manager shall not allow members to be uninformed or misinformed of their rights and responsibilities.

The GM will not:

1. Create or implement a member equity system without the following qualities:
 - a. The required member equity, or fair share, is determined by the Board.
 - b. Members are informed that equity investments are a) at risk, and b) generally refundable, though the Board retains the right to withhold refunds when necessary to protect the Cooperative's financial viability.
 - c. Equity will not be refunded if such refunds would lead to a net decrease in total member paid-in equity, or would risk, cause or exacerbate non-compliance with any Financial Condition policy.
2. Implement a patronage dividend system that does not:
 - a. Comply with IRS regulations.
 - b. Allow the Board to examine a range of options and implications, so the Board can make a timely determination each year concerning how much, if any, of the Cooperative's net profit will be allocated and distributed to members.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B5 - Treatment of Customers

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

The General Manager must not be unresponsive to customer needs.

The GM must not:

1. Operate without a system for soliciting and considering customer opinion regarding preferences, product requests, complaints and suggestions.
2. Allow an unsafe shopping experience for our customers.



Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B6 - Staff Treatment & Compensation

Last Revised: August 23, 2022

The General Manager must not treat staff in any way that is unfair, unsafe or unclear or create or foster a hostile work environment for any employee.

The GM will not:

1. Operate without written personnel policies that:
 - a. Clarify rules for staff.
 - b. Provide for fair and thorough handling of workplace conflicts. The board should not be included as a participant in the conflict resolution process.
 - c. Support employees in reporting unethical or illegal behavior.
 - d. Are accessible to all staff.
 - e. Inform staff that employment is neither permanent nor guaranteed.
2. Cause or allow personnel policies to be inconsistently applied.
3. The GM will not allow inadequate documentation, security and retention of personnel records and all personnel-related decisions.
4. Establish compensation and benefits that are internally or externally inequitable.
5. Change the GM's own compensation and benefits, except as his or her benefits are consistent with a package for all other employees



Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B7 - Communication to the Board

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

The General Manager must not cause or allow the Board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.

The GM must not:

1. Submit monitoring reports that are untimely or inaccurate, or that lack operational definitions and verifiable data directly related to store operations.
2. Report in an untimely manner any actual or anticipated noncompliance with any Board policy, along with a plan for reaching compliance and a proposed schedule regarding follow-up reporting.
3. Allow the Board to be unaware of relevant legal actions, media coverage, trends, public events of the Cooperative, or internal and external changes.
4. Withhold his/her opinion if the GM believes the Board is not in compliance with its own policies on Governance Process and Board-Management Delegation, particularly in the case of Board behavior that is detrimental to the work relationship between the Board and the GM.
5. Deal with the Board in a way that favors or privileges certain directors over others.
6. Fail to supply for the Board's consent agenda all decisions delegated to the GM yet required by law, regulation, or contract to be Board-approved.



Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B8 - Board Logistical Support

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

The General Manager must not allow the Board to have inadequate logistical support.

The GM must not:

1. Provide the Board with insufficient staff administration to support governance activities and Board communication.
2. Allow the Board to be without a workable mechanism for official Board, officer or committee communications.
3. Allow directors to be without an updated copy of the Policy Register, the Bylaws, and the Articles of Incorporation.
4. Provide inadequate information and notice to members concerning Board actions, meetings, activities and events.
5. Allow insufficient archiving of Board documents.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Executive Limitations

Policy Title: B9 - Emergency GM Succession

Last Revised: February 26, 2014

To protect the board from sudden loss of GM services, the GM must not have less than one other manager sufficiently familiar with Board and GM issues and processes to enable her/him to take over with reasonable proficiency as an interim successor.



Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C - Global Governance Commitment

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

Acting on behalf of our owners, the Board ensures the success of the cooperative by working together effectively, empowering and holding accountable professional management, providing strategic leadership for our cooperative, and perpetuating our democratic organization.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C1 - Governing Style

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

We will govern in a manner consistent with the Four Pillars of Cooperative Governance (Teaming, Accountable Empowerment, Strategic Leadership, Democracy). In order to do this, we will:

1. Be a strategic leader by focusing our vision outward and toward the future.
2. Ensure effective systems of delegating authority to professional management, holding the use of that power accountable, and clearly distinguishing between board and management responsibilities.
 - a. Observe the 10 Policy Governance principles (Ends Policies, Ownership, Board Process Policies, Board Holism, Board-Management Relationship Policies, Governance Position, Limitations Policies, Policies/Decisions Come in Sizes, Any Reasonable Interpretation, Monitoring)
3. Maintain team discipline, authority and responsibility.
4. Practice the habits of a successful democracy.
5. Obey all relevant laws and bylaws.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C2 – The Board’s Job

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

In order to govern successfully, we will:

1. Create & sustain a meaningful relationship with member-owners.
2. Hire, compensate, delegate responsibility to, and hold accountable a General Manager.
(See D. Board/GM Relationship Policies)
 - a. Use a strategic process to establish the value of GM Compensation, and complete this process in a timely manner.
3. Have expectations in the form of written governing policies that realistically address the broadest levels of all organizational decisions and situations. We will write these policies in the form of Ends, Executive Limitations, Board Process, and Board/Management Relationship as described in the Policy Governance Principles.
4. Assign responsibility in a way that honors our commitment to empowerment and clear distinction of roles.
5. Rigorously monitor operational performance in the areas of Ends and Executive Limitations, and Board performance in the areas of Board Process and Board/Management Relationship.
6. Perpetuate the Board's leadership capacity using ongoing education, training and recruitment.
7. Perform other duties as required by the bylaws or because of limitations on GM authority.
8. Hire an auditor for the co-op to audit the financials, inventory, and other areas the Board sees as necessary on a periodic basis.



Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C3 – Agenda Planning

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

We will follow a strategic multi-year work plan and annual agenda that focuses our attention upward and outward.

1. We will create, and modify as necessary, an annual calendar that includes tasks and events related to our multi-year work plan, membership meetings, Board training schedule, monitoring schedule, and the GM evaluation and compensation decisions as outlined in our Board Management Relationship policies.
2. Throughout the year, we will attend to consent agenda items as expeditiously as possible.
3. We will limit the amount of meeting time taken up by Executive Limitations monitoring reports, discouraging discussion unless the reports indicate policy violations or the policy criteria themselves need review.



Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C4 - Board Meetings

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

Board meetings are for the task of getting the Board's job done.

1. We will use Board meeting time only for work that is the whole Board's responsibility. We will avoid committee issues, operational matters and personal concerns. However, issues regarding Board conduct are pertinent.
2. Meetings will open to the membership except when executive session is officially called.
 - a. We may occasionally use executive session to deal with confidential matters, as long as the purpose of the session is stated. When possible, announcement of the executive session should be on the published agenda.
3. We will seek consensus through discussion. We will then finalize and document decisions through the use of motions, seconds and majority vote. If a strongly split vote is cast, the Board will continue discussions to try and reach a strong consensus.
4. The meeting agenda will be determined by the Board and Board President, and may be modified at the meeting by a majority vote of the Board.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C5 – Directors' Code of Conduct

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

We each commit ourselves to ethical, businesslike and lawful conduct.

1. Every director is responsible at all times for acting in good faith, in a manner which she/he reasonably believes to be in the best interests of the Cooperative, and with such care as an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances.
2. Directors must demonstrate unconflicted loyalty to the interests of the Cooperative's owners. This accountability supersedes any conflicting loyalty such as that to advocacy or interest groups, membership on other Boards or staffs, and the personal interest of any director acting as an individual consumer or member.
 - a. There will be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any director and the Cooperative except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity and equal access to "inside" information.
 - b. When the Board is to decide on an issue about which a director has an unavoidable conflict of interest, that director shall abstain from conversation and the vote.
 - c. A director who applies for employment must first resign from the Board.
3. Directors may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the organization.
 - a. When interacting with the GM or employees, directors must carefully and openly recognize their lack of authority.
 - b. When interacting with the public, the press, or other entities, directors must recognize the same limitation and the inability of any director to speak for the Board except to repeat explicitly stated Board decisions.
 - c. Directors will respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of sensitive nature and must continue to honor confidentiality after leaving Board service.



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4. Directors will prepare for and attend all Board meetings and trainings.
5. Directors will support the legitimacy and authority of the Board's decision on any matter, irrespective of the director's personal position on the issue.
6. Any director who does not follow code of conduct policy can be removed from the Board by a 2/3 majority vote of the remaining Board.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C6 - Officers' Roles

Last Revised: November 26, 2024

We will elect officers in order to help us accomplish our job.

1. No officer has any authority to supervise or direct the General Manager (GM).
2. Officers may delegate their authority but remain accountable for its use.
3. The President ensures the Board acts consistently with Board policies.
 - a. The President is authorized to use any reasonable interpretation of the provisions in the Board Process and Board-Management Relationship policies.
 - b. The President will chair and send out the board packet for Board meetings and facilitate the Co-op's Annual Meeting.
 - c. The President plans for leadership (officer) perpetuation.
 - d. The President may represent the Board to outside parties.
4. The Vice President will perform the duties of the President in his/her absence. The Vice President will ensure that the election and referenda processes follow the Board's policies and bylaws.
 - a. Complete election/referenda ballots and a separate tally spreadsheet of the totals/results will be filed in a locked filing cabinet in the GM's office for five years. After five years, the ballots may be discarded, but the tally spreadsheets will remain on file.
 - b. Ballot issues will be explained and the tallied election/referenda results reported at the Annual Meeting and in the subsequent member newsletter.
 - c. Coordinate and order NHFC board member shirts for new board members (if budgeted for in current year).
5. The Treasurer will lead the Board's process for creating and monitoring the Board's (not the Cooperative's) budget. The Treasurer will be responsible for the following:



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- a. Create and monitor the Board's budget. Give verbal report on board budget at each meeting.
- b. Chair any committee charged with researching financial-related matters.
- c. Any other duties pertaining to the Treasurer's office as requested by the Board.

6. The Secretary will make sure the Board's documents are accurate, up to date, and appropriately maintained.
 - a. Take minutes at the Annual Meeting, typed in a report format for the Board files. (refer to How To folder in the shared drive for additional guidance).
 - b. Maintain Board Files in the shared drive. Share location with new board members and inform incumbent members of any updated files and where to locate them.
 - c. Take meeting minutes as needed at regular Board meetings and special session meetings. Draft minutes are to be saved in the shared drive and distributed to the Board and GM for review prior to the next scheduled Board Meeting. After minutes are approved by the board, save a copy in PDF format to the shared drive and also email to the Co-op Marketing Manager for updating to the website. Copy the GM, President, and VP.
 - d. Take confidential meeting minutes for Closed Session meetings. These minutes are confidential and available only to current board members. Save these in the Confidential > Board Only subfolder on the shared drive.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C7 - Board Committee Principles

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

We will use Board committees only to help us accomplish our job.

- I. Committees will reinforce and support the wholeness of the Board
 - a. In particular, committees help the whole Board move forward when they research alternatives and bring back options and information.
2. Board committees may not speak or act for the Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time limited purposes.
3. The Board will establish, regularly review and control committee responsibilities in written committee charters. The three standing committees maintained by the Board will be the Education, Perpetuation, and General Manager Evaluation Committees. Ad hoc committees may also be established.
 - a. We will carefully state committee expectations and authority to make sure they do not conflict with authority delegated to the GM.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C8 - Governance Investment

Last Revised: June 18, 2019

We will invest in the Board's governance capacity.

1. We will make sure that Board skills, methods, and supports are sufficient to allow us to govern with excellence.
2. We will incur governance costs prudently, though not at the expense of endangering the development and maintenance of superior capability.
 - a. We will use training and retraining liberally to orient new directors and candidates for membership, as well as to maintain and increase existing directors' skills and understanding.
 - b. We will arrange outside monitoring assistance as necessary so that the Board can exercise confident control over organizational performance.
 - c. We will use outreach mechanisms as needed to ensure our ability to listen to owner viewpoints and values.
 - d. We will use professional and administrative support.
3. We will develop the Board's annual budget in a timely way so as to not interfere with the development of the Cooperative's annual budget. In no case will we complete this work later than October. The Board's annual budget will be based on a percentage of store sales and shall be no more than one half of one percent of annual sales. The Board is not required to use that entire budget.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C9 - Board Member Succession

Last Revised: June 18, 2019

In the event a board member for any reason is unable to discharge their duties and responsibilities as a member of the Co-Op Board and there is more than one board meeting before the next election, the following processes will be used to name a replacement.

1. The Board will retrieve the election results of the latest board election.
2. Establish the candidate(s) who had the next most votes in the election.
3. The Chair will contact that individual(s) to determine if they are still interested in serving on the Board of Directors.
 - a. If the results of the election were a tie the interest of both individuals will be assessed. If they are both interested in serving, the board will vote on the two to determine a replacement. If only one is interested and the other is not, the interested party will be named the replacement.
 - b. If they are not interested, the Board will continue going down the results of the election until an interested party is discovered and they will be named the replacement.
 - c. If no party is interested or the election was not contested, the Board will appoint a replacement.
4. That individual will serve out the remainder of the year until the next member meeting. The new member will retain all committee memberships as the previous board member.

If there is an election forthcoming after the very next board meeting, the board will wait and use the next election results to continue with the above process. It will be advertised and made aware to the member owners that they are also voting to fill a partial term of a departing board member.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board Process

Policy Title: C10 - Board Meeting Attendance

Last Revised: May 21, 2025

This policy is intended to support regular attendance of all board members. The policy is reviewed once a year (at orientation) and maintained in each member's Board Manual. This policy has been reviewed and approved by the board (see signature and date below).

1. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the following actions:
 - a. If absences are excessive or unapproved, an individual's monthly Board stipend may be suspended.
 - b. Missing more than three board meetings in a year (25%) will result in a vote to determine a board member's continued involvement on the board.
2. This policy applies to all board members.

A board-attendance problem occurs if any of the following conditions exist.

1. The member has two un-notified absences ("un-notified" means the member did not call ahead to a reasonable contact in the organization before the upcoming meeting to indicate they would be gone from the upcoming meeting).
2. The member does not attend nor participate in committee meetings.
3. The member misses one third of the total number of board meetings in a twelve-month period.

If a board-attendance problem exists regarding a member, the Board President will promptly contact the member to discuss the problem. The member's response will be shared by the President with the entire board at the next board meeting. In that meeting, the board will decide what actions to take regarding the board member's future membership on the board. If the board decides to terminate the board member's membership, termination will be conducted per this policy. The board will promptly initiate a process to begin recruiting a new board member.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board/Management Relationship

Policy Title: D - Global Board/Management Connection

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

The Board's sole official connection to the operations of the cooperative will be through the General Manager.



Policy Type: Board/Management Relationship

Policy Title: D1 – Unity of Control

Last Revised: March 24, 2014

Only officially passed motions of the Board are binding on the GM.

1. Decisions or instructions of individual directors, officers, or committees are not binding on the GM except in rare instances when the Board has specifically authorized this power.
2. In the case of directors or committees requesting information or assistance without Board authorization, the GM can refuse any request that, in the GM's opinion, may disrupt operations or that require too much staff time or resources.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board/Management Relationship

Policy Title: D2 - Accountability of GM

Last Revised: November 22, 2008

The General Manager is the Board's only link to operational achievement and conduct.

1. The Board will view GM performance as identical to organizational performance so that the Cooperative's accomplishment of Board stated ends and avoidance of Board-proscribed means will be viewed as successful GM performance.
2. The Board will not instruct or evaluate any employee other than the GM.



Policy Type: Board/Management Relationship

Policy Title: D3 – Delegation to the GM

Last Revised: October 27, 2010

The Board delegates authority to the GM through written Ends and Executive Limitations policies.

1. As long as the GM uses any reasonable interpretation of the Board's Ends and Executive Limitations policies, the GM is authorized to establish all further policies, practices and plans for the Cooperative.
2. The Board will respect and accept the GM's choices as long as those choices are based on reasonable interpretations of the Board's policies.
3. If the Board changes an End or Executive Limitations policy, the change only applies in the future.



Board Policies

Policy Type: Board/Management Relationship

Policy Title: D4 - Monitoring GM Performance

Last Revised: October 20, 2020

The Board will systematically and rigorously monitor and evaluate the GM's job performance.

1. Monitoring is how the Board determines the degree to which the GM is following Board policies. Information that does not directly relate to Ends or Executive Limitations policies is not monitoring information.
2. The Board will acquire monitoring information by one or more of three methods:
 - a. By internal report, in which the GM discloses interpretations and compliance information to the Board.
 - b. By external report, in which external, disinterested third party selected by the Board assesses compliance with Board policies.
 - c. By direct Board inspection, in which a designated director or committee assesses compliance with the policy criteria.
3. In every case, the standard compliance will be any reasonable GM interpretation (as described by operational definitions and metrics) of the Board policy being monitored. The Board is the final arbiter of reasonableness but will always judge with a "reasonable person" test rather than with interpretations favored by individual directors or by the Board as a whole.
4. The GM is compliant with a policy if he/she presents a reasonable interpretation and adequate data that demonstrate accomplishment of that interpretation.
5. The Board will monitor all policies that instruct the GM.
6. The Board can monitor any policy at any time by a method listed above but will ordinarily follow the schedule outlined in the Board Annual Calendar. The Board's annual evaluation of the General Manager will be based on a summary of monitoring reports received for the calendar year from January through December. The evaluation will be completed each year by January 31st.

In a contract year, the renewal will be completed by March 31st.