



## Rights of the Worker Owners

### Financial Participation

Members have the...

- Right to some of the co-op's profits as laid out by the bylaws.
- Right to decide allocation of co-op's money including investments, buying new equipment or materials, and more (in some co-ops this can fall into the responsibility of the board of directors, president, coordinator, a committee, etc. ...)

### Speech and Vocal Participation

Members have the...

- Right to propose agenda items to be discussed at co-op meetings
- Right to speak at meetings of the worker-owners
- Right to raise issues in public and communicate opinions in forums, conferences, and other avenues of discussion about co-ops.
- Right to participate in co-worker annual evaluations (not all co-ops have this).

### Education

Members have the...

- Right to educational opportunities that will enable them to be responsible worker-owners who can effectively govern the co-op.
- Right to education on how the co-op works and their role in it.

### Voting

Members have the...

- Right to participate in all discussions that happen before all-worker votes.
- Right to vote to add to, delete portions of, or change the bylaws.
- Right to vote on candidates for the Board of Directors (some co-ops do not have a Board of directors or all worker-owners are automatically members of the Board. However, in those co-ops with Boards that have elected officials, they must be elected by the worker-owners).
- Right to vote on the hiring or firing of new members (in some co-ops this is left in the hands of the president or a committee).

### Governance Rights

Members have the...

- Right to be the highest power in the co-op. This pertains to the worker-owners as a cooperative body, not to each individual member.
- Right to run for the Board of Directors (again, in some co-ops all members automatically make up the Board and in others there is no Board. However, for co-ops that do have an elected Board of Directors, all members do enjoy this right.)
- Right to run for the co-op president or coordinator. (Not all cooperatives have presidents or coordinators, but for those co-ops that do, all members enjoy this right.)
- Right to issue resolutions to the Board if approved by a co-op vote (this applies only to co-ops that have elected Board members).

### Information Access

Members have the...

- Right to obtain and hold onto the co-op's bylaws.
- Right to access all Board Resolutions, Personnel Policy, and every document explicitly ratified by the Board or Worker-Owner body
- Right to timely and relevant information about the workings of the co-op business



## Overall Rights

Members have the...

- Right to one non-transferable [share](#) of the worker cooperative.
- Right to health benefits decided on by the co-op.
- Right to some holiday and vacation time.
- Right to refuse to carry out work they find morally objectionable.
- All workers have the right to due process if accused with an offense and if facing a reprimand or punishment from the co-op (including being fired). Members must be informed of their accused offense and also be given a fair hearing and an opportunity to appeal to the rest of the membership. However, members can be discontinued as workers and owners for cause. Here, “cause” means that the individual’s membership in the co-op interferes with the smooth operations of the business.

## Responsibilities and Obligations of the Worker Owner

### Financial Responsibilities and Obligations

Members have the...

- Obligation to buy one member share (or stock) of the cooperative.
- Responsibility to take on some of the cooperative’s net losses (if no surplus is made).
- Responsibility to make allocation decisions with the best interests of the cooperative and its long-term health in mind.

### Responsibilities and Obligations of Participation

Members have the...

- Obligation to attend meetings of the co-op.
- Obligation to work in the co-op.
- Responsibility to participate in co-op votes
- Responsibility to review materials provided as background to discussions or votes
- Responsibility to participate in co-op activities
- Responsibility to mentor new staff

### Conduct Responsibility

Members have the...

- Responsibility to act with mutual respect and courteousness toward their fellow co-op members.

### Education Responsibilities

Members have the...

- Responsibility to educate oneself about the cooperative and governance structure of their co-op.
- Responsibility to educate oneself about the business and other operations of their co-op.

### Overall Responsibility

- Must work in the co-op a set number of hours approved by the co-op before becoming a full worker-owner.

### Responsibilities of the Cooperative

The cooperative as a whole also has responsibilities to the members. These include:

1. The responsibility to create a business based on the equalization of work and member participation.
2. The responsibility to implement a pay ratio policy. This is a policy that limits how much one worker can make compared to another. Some co-ops prohibit one worker from making two times more than any other worker (a 2 to 1 pay ratio), while others institute higher ratios (7 to 1, etc.).
3. The responsibility to make sure that the business retains its cooperative values and practices. Such as: maintaining that membership is preserved only for workers, and no member shall be allowed to own more than one share.
4. The responsibility to respect and carry out the decisions made by the worker-owner body.
5. The responsibility to a healthful workplace in accordance to the standards set forth by the members.
6. The responsibility to not discriminate on the basis of gender, religion, sexual preference, race, ethnicity, or physical ability.