

Orientation Guide for New Co-op Board Directors

This guide is developed to assist a new Co-op Board Director as they orient into their role. The guide is designed to be used in tandem with the [Inclusive Board Orientation Guide for Co-ops](#) - a version of the same guide but facing the team responsible for the orientation. Please note that this resource is intended to be customized to reflect specific aspects important to your co-op. Feel free to adjust it as you wish!



The purpose of this guide is to help you navigate your new role as a co-op board director and ensure that you get all the information you need. Successful orientation makes sure that your unique skillset, perspectives and ideas have a pathway to be shared and received. This is a two-way process and should promote learning both ways.

Fill-out section: Co-op Overview	
Name of Co-op	
Type of Co-op Structure	
Vision & Mission Statements	
Values & Principles	
Strategic Goals	
Board Directors	
Senior Leadership	
Who Our Members Are	

Co-created Goals & Expectations for Orientation

What are your goals, expectations and needs related to this orientation process? Jot them down here considering what information is needed, what processes need to be understood, and how relationships are tended to.

	Goals & Expectations for Orientation
Content & Information - What do I need to know to understand and fulfill this role?	
Process - How is information best shared/ received? What mode of communication is preferred?	
Relationships - What is needed to build trust and create a safe learning environment?	

Orientation Checklist

1. The Basics

Have you received a “Welcome Package,” including:

- Director’s Agreement (for review and signature)
- Role & Committee Descriptions
- Decision-making process
- Information about co-ops; [internationally recognized principles & values](#)
- Bylaws
- Vision, Mission & Values
- Annual Budget
- Annual Calendar
- Annual Report & Financial Statements
- Conflict of Interest policy and other governance policies
- Board structure including committees and their responsibilities
- Recent meeting minutes and reports
- Organizational chart/list with names, roles, pronouns & contact info
- Organization’s DEI Commitment
- Employment Equity Act and Anti-discrimination & Anti-harassment Policy & resources
- Access to common drives and other internal systems

- Accountability Process
- Performance Measures
- Feedback Processes

Optional/if applicable:

- Parking & transportation information
- Employee Handbook / HR Policies
- Affinity or employee resource groups/guide
- Keys
- Business cards
- Technology equipment (computer/phone/software..)
- Email

Accessibility Needs

- I have had an opportunity to raise accessibility needs and request potential accommodations

Making Connections

- I have been introduced to the board.
 - I know all directors' names, pronouns and roles.
- I have been assigned an Orientation Partner.
 - I have a meeting set up with my Orientation Partner.

Schedule:

- I have received details about upcoming board meetings and other events.
- I have been added to relevant meeting invites.

Notes & Questions

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2. First Board Meeting

- I have prepared for the meeting by reading the agenda and any associated documents.
- I have checked in with my Orientation Partner with any questions about agenda items or the process to expect in the meeting.
- I understand protocols for speaking up or raising questions in the meeting.
- I understand that I can observe initial meetings to deepen my understanding of the process.
- I understand the decision-making process and when I need to participate in this process (e.g., shift from observing to action).
- I understand the communication norms of the Board (e.g., informal discussions vs formal structures for raising questions or making motions, as well as communication with directors outside of board meetings).

3. First Month

- I have attended a formal orientation session.
- I have been introduced to people in senior leadership.
- I have read through the by-laws and the mission statement.
- I am familiar with the co-op's policies.
- I am familiar with the board's governance structures and other processes.
- I have read and understood the co-op's anti-discrimination & anti-harassment policy.
- I have met with my Orientation Partner.
- I am aware of training, conferences and/or professional development opportunities relevant to my role, and procedures to request attendance and funding.
- There has been ample opportunity for me to ask questions, express ideas and provide feedback on existing board structures and processes.

Notes & Questions

4. Looking ahead:

- I have been given the opportunity to provide feedback on the orientation process.
- I have been able to give feedback on the organization's culture, practices and DEI commitment.
- I have been given the opportunity to have follow-up meetings with and ask questions to my Orientation Partner.

Compliance Activities

Information to complete details in this table can be found in your jurisdiction's Co-operative Act, your co-ops Rules/Bylaws, and is often known by experienced Board Directors and/or the Executive Director.

Compliance Activity	Time of Year / Date	Who is Responsible
Election of Officers/Executive		
Director Terms		
AGM Reporting		
Director Nominations		
AGM Decision-Making		
Annual Co-operative Filings / Returns		

Worker Insurance / Training		
Payroll Remittances / T4 / T4A		
Tax / Non-Profit / Charitable Returns		

Risk/Opportunities Management

The agreements and documents listed below may or may not be present in this co-op. If they are not present, it may be something that can be initiated when there is capacity.

Check in with your Orientation Partner about whether the following are in place in this co-op:

- Directors and officers (D&O) agreement
- Management Hiring/Performance Review
- D&O, Commercial and other insurance
- Value/principle/legislation-informed policies
- Co-op SWOT/Evaluation
- Strategic goals and plan
- Reporting
- New directions/investments