

# Sample Co-op Bill of Rights

*Adapted from Gifford & Libba Pinchot's "Bill of Rights and Responsibilities of an Intelligent Organization"<sup>1</sup>*

Under the umbrella of human rights, this tool lists several categories of rights and responsibilities that are critical for building and maintaining an ownership culture.

Category	I have the right to...	I have the responsibility to ...
Freedom of Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of speech (written &amp; oral)</li> <li>• Privacy in communications</li> <li>• Say what I need to say</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak truth</li> <li>• Appreciate and bring out the many sides to every issue</li> <li>• See the good in others and express it</li> <li>• Receive and give feedback</li> </ul>
Freedom of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom of inquiry</li> <li>• Develop my knowledge and competence</li> <li>• Understand the nature and benefit of the cooperative model in general</li> <li>• Understand the nature of our co-op and its role in the wider industry</li> <li>• Learn in public: share my development and my works in progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be curious, persistent, and aware</li> <li>• Learn from past failures and successes</li> <li>• Apply my learning for the benefit of the co-op</li> <li>• Keep learning and growing</li> </ul>
Freedom of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become a member owner</li> <li>• Participate in the governance of the co-op</li> <li>• Decide collectively about profit sharing</li> <li>• Share in the co-op's success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to the success of the co-op</li> <li>• Act with courage and integrity</li> <li>• Respond to the needs of the whole system</li> </ul>
Freedom of cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have my needs met</li> <li>• Participate in the broader cooperative movement</li> <li>• Leave the cooperative at any time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work for the good of the co-op</li> <li>• Act in accordance with cooperative principles</li> <li>• Contribute to making decisions</li> <li>• Achieve a common purpose</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Pinchot, G. & Pinchot, E. (1994). *The End of Bureaucracy and the Rise of the Intelligent Organization*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Category	I have the right to...	I have the responsibility to ...
Freedom of Network Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Freedom of association</li> <li>● Freedom of choices</li> <li>● Freedom to make and honor commitments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Make commitments wisely</li> <li>● Deliver on my commitments</li> <li>● Use others' time wisely</li> <li>● Serve the co-op community</li> </ul>
A Community of Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Full benefits and responsibilities in the co-op, regardless of my ownership status</li> <li>● A community that cares for my welfare</li> <li>● An ethical organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Neither show nor tolerate bias or prejudice</li> <li>● Balance self-interest with the common good</li> <li>● Work toward worthwhile common vision and values</li> <li>● Find value in diversity</li> </ul>
Justice and the Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Freedom within the "law" (e.g. bylaws, policies)</li> <li>● Fair treatment within the "law"</li> <li>● An independent system of justice (e.g. tribunal)</li> <li>● Delegate my power</li> <li>● Hold others accountable for their power</li> <li>● Collectively control checks and balances on the exercise of power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Obey the "law"</li> <li>● Work to establish good laws</li> <li>● Avoid self-serving rules and entitlements</li> <li>● Fight injustice</li> <li>● Be accountable for my power</li> </ul>
Democratic Member Control and Self-Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participation in designing the policies and systems of the co-op</li> <li>● Hold the co-op governing body accountable</li> <li>● Effective channels for member engagement</li> <li>● Effective governance that guides the co-op</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Listen to others</li> <li>● Educate myself on the realities of the business</li> <li>● Stand up for what I believe</li> <li>● Participate in the co-op governance according to our co-op's rules and by-laws</li> <li>● Use incentives, not mandates, whenever possible</li> <li>● Be farsighted</li> <li>● Reward service to the whole</li> <li>● Push decisions to the lowest possible level</li> <li>● Be good stewards of co-op resources</li> <li>● Advocate for others' rights</li> <li>● Contribute to the direction and purpose of the co-op</li> </ul>

NOTE: The rights and responsibilities below are intended to accrue to workers in a cooperative regardless of their ownership status or place in the management hierarchy. While we understand that worker-owners may have additional rights granted to them by the cooperative by-laws we believe a co-op's Bill of Rights should be inclusive of all workers.