Board-Owner Communication Plan

Maintained by Board-Owner Communication Committee

Introduction

The Board-Owner Communication Plan is intended to provide structure for Board-Owner communication, but not to be rigid. It is intended to be a living document for the Board to amend as it sees fit.

When making updates to the plan, the most important factor to keep in mind is that the Board has very limited time to devote to communications. After all, directors are volunteers and communications has to compete with a lot of other Board responsibilities for directors' time and attention. The plan calendar should aim to pare things down to only the most essential communications priorities.

Communication Plan Goals

1. Effectively notify Owners of Board-related events and the results of said events. (E.g., Board elections, Annual Owners Meetings, Owner forums.)
2. Make it easy for Owners to become informed and stay informed (ease the on-ramp to engagement with the Board).
3. Facilitate proactive planning of opportunities for the Board and Owners to converse on strategic matters.
4. Foster an atmosphere/culture of Board openness, transparency, approachability, and accessibility.

Board-Owner Communication Calendar

(For Calendar Key, see just below calendar.)

Month	Communications Topics	Board Member(s) Responsible	Assignment	Outlets	Date
January	"Run for the Board" (reminder of application due date w/ recap of Board responsibilities & quotes from existing Board members on why they serve and how they've liked Board service)	N&E, with quotes from ~3 Directors	Recap: ~100 words Quotes: ~100 words each	Reminder & quotes: C.N., eNews, website Reminder also advertised by marketing on various other Co-op outlets	Early in the month, see election timeline
	DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion) report (brief update from Board on steps taken in last year in the areas of DEI)	~~Officer~~ Director	Writing assignment TBD	C.N., eNews, website	Start of new year or MLK Day
	Owner forum & survey (for forum topic, refer to Board strategic workplan) Photo-op	BDC & BOCC BOCC	Plan & facilitate forum, surveys Photos	Forum held over Zoom or in-person Forum & surveys advertised by marketing on various Co-op outlets Photos used by marketing including on website	Forum early in the month; surveys available until end of month
February	Announce Board candidates	N&E	~100 words	Marketing will advertise on various Co-op outlets (e.g., C.N., eNews, website, Facebook, bulletin board)	Mid-Feb, see election timeline
	Brief summary/report on results of Owner forum & survey (summary if discussions ongoing, report if decision reached)	BDC/BOCC	Writing assignment TBD	C.N., eNews, website	TBD
March	Board Candidate Forum	N&E	~100 words	Event held over Zoom or in-person Event advertised by marketing on various Co-op outlets	Mid-March , see election timeline

	Board election (reminder to vote)	N&E	~100 words or less	Reminder advertised by marketing on various Co-op outlets	Second half of March, see election timeline
April	Welcome new directors, thank outgoing	N&E	~100 words	C.N., eNews, Facebook, Website	After election results announced
	Announce new Board officers, thank outgoing	~~Officer~~ Director	~100 words	C.N., eNews, website	After Board meeting
	Annual Report (President + Treasurer reports) Emphasize Annual Report	President, Treasurer BDC	~400 words each ~100 words	Website Report will be advertised on C.N., eNews, website	Before Annual Meeting
	Annual Owners Meeting (attend w/ Board nametag, photo-op)	BOCC	Plan the event Photos	Forum held over Zoom or in-person Event advertised by marketing on various Co-op outlets Photos used by marketing including on website	Second half of April
May	Recap of Annual Owners Meeting	BOCC	~400 words	C.N., eNews, Facebook, website	Early May
June	Highlights of Spring Retreat	~~Officer~~ Director	~100-200 words	C.N., eNews, Facebook, Board web page	TBD
	Photoshoot—Board members shopping in the store	BOCC plans; as many directors participate as possible	Planning, photos	C.N., eNews, Facebook, Instagram, website Photos used by marketing including on website	TBD
July	-	-	-	-	-
August	-	-	-	-	-
Sept-ember	Owner forum & survey (for forum topic, refer to Board strategic workplan) Photo-op	BDC & BOCC BOCC	Plan & facilitate forum, surveys Photos	Forum held over Zoom or in-person Forum & surveys advertised by marketing on various Co-op outlets Photos used by marketing including on website	Forum early in the month; surveys available until end of month

October	"Run for the Board" (highlight Board role & responsibilities)	N&E	~200-400 words	C.N., eNews, Bulletin Board	See election timeline
	Brief summary/report on results of Owner forum & survey (summary if discussions ongoing, report if decision reached)	BDC/BOCC	Writing assignment TBD	C.N., eNews, website	TBD
	Int'l Co-op Month (short pieces from directors on what they appreciate most about cooperative business model/highlighting core tenets of the model)	~3 Directors	~100-200 words TBD	C.N., eNews, website	TBD
Nov-ember	Continue advertising "Run for the Board"	N&E	-	Marketing will advertise on various Co-op outlets (e.g., C.N., eNews, website, bulletin board)	All month
Dec-ember	Year recap + Highlights of Fall Retreat	~~Officer~~ Director	Writing assignment TBD	C.N., eNews, website	Before end of Fall semester
	Continue advertising "Run for the Board"	N&E	-	Marketing will advertise on various Co-op outlets (e.g., C.N., eNews, website, bulletin board)	All month
Recurring / Ongoing	Monthly Board meetings -10-minute Owner comment period -Photo-op	Board BOCC	- Photos	Board meetings (including owner comment periods) advertised by marketing on various Co-op outlets Photos used by marketing including on website	First week of each month
	"Board meeting highlights" (short friendly paragraphs to communicate highlights of minutes in more accessible format)	~~Secretary~~ Director who attended the meeting	100-200 words	C.N., eNews, website, bulletin board	~A month after each meeting
	Board packet materials -Owner packet -Board & GM monitoring reports/surveys available upon request (after minutes approved)	BDC	- -	Owner packet available on website Monitoring reports/surveys available upon request	~A week before each meeting ~A month after each meeting

	Owners Week (attend events w/ Board nametag, photo-op)	Director(s) who are interested	Photos	Photos used by marketing including on website	Owner's Weeks
	Tasteful Thursdays/First Thursdays (attend events w/ Board nametag, photo-op)	Director(s) who are interested	Photos	Photos used by marketing including on website	Various Thursdays
	Highlights of conferences that director(s) attend	A director who attended	Writing assignment TBD	C.N., eNews, website	Soon after any conference
	Promote Participating Owner positions (especially open ones) on Board committees	BOCC	Writing assignment TBD	Website, bulletin board	ongoing
	Share current Board composition & bios	BOCC	Bios	Website, bulletin board	ongoing
	Provide information on the Board's purpose and how it functions -What's an operations/Board question? Chart -Board FAQs	BOCC	Writing assignment TBD video & written	Website	ongoing

Other Board communications work this plan does not cover:

- outreach by the Nominations & Elections Committee to recruit Board candidates;
- communications with various non-Owner groups and individuals, which the Board typically does for other projects and goals on an as-needed basis; and
- outreach to potential Owners (such outreach is entirely delegated to management, since the Board's primary responsibility is communicating with existing Owners and that is a big responsibility to begin with).

Calendar Key:

Outlets:
"Co-op outlets" include, but are not limited to: C.N., eNews, Facebook, Instagram, website, bulletin board, front doors, marquee
C.N. = Community News
eNews = eNewsletter
website = Board web pages on Co-op's website
bulletin board = the Board bulletin board by the Co-op restrooms
front doors = posters placed on the Co-op's front doors
marquee = the Co-op's illuminated sign on the corner of 5th and Washington

Board Member(s) Responsible:

Director = any Board member(s)
Officer = Board President, Vice President, Secretary, and/or Treasurer
N&E = Nominations & Elections Committee
BOCC = Board-Owner Communication Committee
BDC = Board Development Committee

For publishing written pieces

The process for publishing written Board pieces is for the responsible Board member(s) to send their pieces to the GM and either request a) that marketing disseminate them on all outlets the department deems appropriate, or b) that the pieces be published on specific outlets. If the Board member(s) request a specific outlet and the GM and/or marketing don't think that outlet makes sense for the item in question, they will confer with the Board member(s) and explain why. If there are lingering disagreements, since the Board has delegated authority over most outlets to the GM, the GM would make the final call.

The sole outlets the Board has reserved authority over to itself are the Board web pages on the Co-op's website (shorthand in calendar above: "website") and the Board bulletin board by the Co-op restrooms.

[Next update xx.xx.20xx (START) goes here]

Example:

Discontinued:

- -

Added:

- -

Changed:

- -

[Next update xx.xx.20xx (END) goes here]

Update 10.05.2021 (inaugural) (START)

Board-Owner Communication Plan goals finalized.

First Board-Owner Communication Calendar adopted.

Discontinued:

- Nonessential Board writing assignments
- Owner forums that do not pertain to Board work (e.g., the Organic vs Conventional forum)
- Tabling for Owners Weeks

Maintained: ongoing Board-Owner communications involving

- Monthly Board meetings
- The Annual Owners Meeting
- The Board election application and voting process
- Providing information on the Board's purpose and how it functions
- Attending Co-op events as Board members

Added:

- Writing Assignments
  - Board meeting highlights
  - Board retreat and conference highlights
  - Board end-of-year recap
  - Announcing new Board officers, thanking outgoing
  - Updates on steps the Board has taken for DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion)
  - Writing on the benefits of cooperatives for Co-op Month
- Photoshoot—Board members shopping in the store
- Photo-ops
- Owner forums & surveys
- Making Board & GM monitoring reports/surveys available upon request
- Board FAQs answers

Added: Owner forums & surveys

Holding forums with Owners about important Co-op matters is a highly valuable way for the Board and Owners to interface. At the time of this update, the Board has made infrequent use of this communication tool in recent years. As part of the plan's goal to "Facilitate proactive planning of opportunities for the Board and Owners to converse on strategic matters", the calendar calls for the Board to start holding forums twice a year.

The plan is for forums to be held early in the month (January and September, respectively), and afterwards for a survey to be kept open for Owners to take the rest of the month. We know that not all Owners will be able to attend the forums, and we want to give them the means to weigh in. We also want to capture as much Owner input as possible.

The forums and surveys will be intentionally designed to gather specific input to advance existing Board discussions towards decision points. They will be designed for the Board to a) share information with Owners, b) answer Owner questions, and c) solicit Owner feedback, ideas, and priorities. We hope and expect that by ensuring the forums focus on matters of real import to Owners and inform actual Board decisions, attendance will be high enough for the forums to be useful to the Board. Moreover, we hope and expect that, once forums become an established recurring part of Board operation, they will

foster a culture of active Owner participation by demonstrating to Owners that their voices matter in the process.

The topics of the forums will be planned in advance as part of the multi-year strategic Board work plan (hereupon adopted), which will be maintained by the Board Development Committee on behalf of the Board. The Board as a whole will plan the details of the forum presentations (e.g., which information the Board wants to share with Owners and which questions the Board wants to ask Owners), while the Board-Owner Communication Committee will take care of the event planning.

(Side note: the Board will have to decide whether to hold forums over Zoom and/or in-person. Zoom sessions are more accessible for most Owners and make PPT presentations easier, but in-person is more intimate and that can't be underestimated. The ideal option would be to hold two forums, one in-person and one over Zoom, but that may not be a sustainable ask on the Board's time. Once the Board & admin get more practice with these forums, doing one of each might become more feasible, but probably not at the outset.)

Added: Making Board & GM monitoring reports/surveys available upon request

While Owners are welcome and invited to attend Co-op Board meetings, the meetings are not designed to be optimized for Owners to follow along with Board discussion on all agenda items. This is intentional; the meetings are chiefly for the purpose of the Board getting work done, and this requires a degree of opacity with certain documents that are "predecisional" so the Board may speak freely.

As such, at the time of this update, the Board admin prepares an "Owner packet" version of the Board meeting packet each month that contains some, but not all, of the documents in the full Board meeting packet. Among the omitted documents are the GM monitoring reports and Board Means monitoring surveys. Owners have had no means of accessing these documents at any point.

The plan calls for a change to this practice to advance the plan's goal to "Foster an atmosphere/culture of Board openness, transparency, approachability, and accessibility." When the Board acts on (e.g., votes on) a document like a monitoring report or survey in a meeting, such documents are no longer "predecisional" and, going forward, they will become available for Owners to view as soon as the minutes for that meeting are approved (they may be modified as necessary to protect sensitive information). The documents will be available upon request as opposed to being automatically distributed or made downloadable. Owners may request any documents they are interested in and the Board will provide a printed version at the customer service desk for the Owners to read and return in-store.

This means Board meetings are not a primary way the Board interfaces with Owners about the Board's activities (aside from the 10-minute Owner comment periods at the beginning of each meeting). Rather, the Board uses minutes, highlights, and recaps to share the Board's activities.

Added: FAQs answers

The Board wants to prepare to answer Owners' FAQs so we can provide consistent information. To do this, the Board will:

- Use the GM's FYI Report as a key source of information on current Co-op operations
- Develop "elevator speeches" for perennial FAQs, such as:
    - What does the Board do?
    - Will the Co-op be expanding to [insert town/city]? When?
    - What makes the Co-op different from other healthfood stores?
    - When should I direct a question to the Board vs the staff?

Change: writing assignments

The Board regularly assigns directors to write on its behalf as a means of communicating with Owners. At the time of this update, the way the Board assigns writing assignments and determines the content of the assignments is off the cuff and at the end of Board meetings. There isn't advance discussion on what the writing assignments should focus on or how they tie into a greater communications strategy.

The communications calendar aims to help shift the Board's approach to writing assignments to be more strategic and proactive. It provides and schedules several writing assignment topics that were identified as best serving the plan's goals.

It also discontinues the longstanding Board practice of assigning directors to write on various subjects about which they have some passion or expertise (e.g., agriculture, sustainability, health, etc.), but which do not pertain to Board work. Such writing assignments would do little to help the Board achieve the communication plan's goals, and thus under the plan are considered nonessential communications. Given that the Board has sharply limited time to devote to communications, any nonessential communications should be kept to a minimum, if not cut out altogether, so they do not come at the expense of communications that advance the plan's goals. (Of course, directors are always welcome, as Owners, to contribute such pieces to Co-op publications alongside their Board service, but writing those pieces should not be confused as Board service.)

Update 10.5.2021 (inaugural) (END)

Appendix – Board Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan (Draft)

The purpose of this workplan is to provide loose structure that can flex with changing circumstances and emergent opportunities. In particular, the results of strategic conversations (both between the Board & Owners, and amongst the Board) are expected to affect future forum and strategic conversation topics.

Nothing is rigid, but by following the calendar pretty closely the Board will be able to better fulfill its duties.

Recurring items:

-Ends review every 4 years or more frequently.

-GM Compensation every 2 years (offset with Ends review)

-Owner Forum + Survey biannually

-Board Strategic conversation each Fall

-Update the plan itself annually or more frequently (updating the plan might belong on the Policy C3 annual calendar instead)

2022	Items	
Winter	• Owner Forum + Survey (**Expansion of Services**) (Jan)	
Spring	• Complete Biennial GM Compensation Review (March) • Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (May)	
Summer	• Update Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan (BDC)	
Fall	• Owner Forum + Survey (**Ends Review**) (Sept) • Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (Oct)	
2023		
Winter	• Owner Forum + Survey (**Ends Review**) (Jan)	
Spring	• Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (May)	
Summer	• Update Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan (BDC)	
Fall	• Owner Forum + Survey (**Discount Program**) (Sept) • Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (Oct)	
2024		

Winter	● Owner Forum + Survey (**???**) (Jan) ● Complete Ends Review (Feb)	
Spring	● Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (May)	
Summer	● Update Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan (BDC)	
Fall	● Begin Biennial GM Compensation Review (Sept) ● Owner Forum + Survey (**???**) (Sept) ● Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (Oct)	
2025		
Winter	● Owner Forum + Survey (**???**) (Jan)	
Spring	● Complete Biennial GM Compensation Review (March) ● Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (May)	
Summer	● Update Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan (BDC)	
Fall	● Owner Forum + Survey (**???**) (Sept) ● Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (Oct)	
2026		
Winter	● Owner Forum + Survey (**???**) (Jan)	
Spring	● Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (May)	
Summer	● Update Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan (BDC)	
Fall	● Begin Biennial GM Compensation Review (Sept) ● Owner Forum + Survey (**???**) (Sept) ● Board Strategic conversation (**???**) (Oct)	