

Membership Committee Policy: outstanding 2010 recommendations

Approved by the Board, February 2011

Policy MC-1: Volunteer Policy

Purpose:

- To promote a sense of Co-op community
- To promote Member-Owner involvement in the governance of TPSS Co-op
- To promote access to lower-income families
- To add value to staff work

Legal Considerations:

Federal Law requires for-profit employers to provide workers certain benefits and protections under wage and hours laws. The services that a volunteer performs must not replace or impair employment opportunities of others by performing work that would otherwise be performed by regular employees. An individual may volunteer to perform such tasks as driving vehicles.

Types of Tasks and Special Events:

1. To perform tasks the staff does not perform: such as delivering food to seniors and/or day care centers.
2. To assist with Co-op special projects, such as maintaining a community garden.
3. To write articles for Co-op-related publications, such as the TPSS Newsletter or website.
4. To perform tasks throughout the store for educational and or charitable needs. Students are not required to have a work permit to volunteer
5. To perform tasks at benefit programs: Earth Day Celebration, 4th of July, Takoma Park Jazz Festival, Takoma Park Folk Festival, Takoma Park Street Festival, Harvest Celebration/Pumpkin Painting, providing volunteers to local schools upon the school's request
6. To serve on committees for the Co-op: such as the Finance Committee, Nominations Committee, and Membership Committee (or do support work for committees, such as conducting research on behalf of a Committee). Committees meet once a month. Committee members must be Co-op member-owners.

Benefits

TPSS Management will administer the volunteer program and shall report to the Membership Committee (or the Board, if the Membership Committee is inactive) on an annual basis. As a show of the Co-op's appreciation of the services volunteers render on behalf of TPSS Co-op, TPSS Management may provide volunteers with discount cards or gift cards. As a guideline, TPSS management may elect to provide member-volunteers who ably perform tasks at benefit programs a gift card for volunteer time. Members serving on one or more committees may be provided with a 20% discount coupon at the close of the meeting. Nothing in this policy shall be read, however, to require compensation of volunteers. TPSS Management also has discretion to provide greater benefits than outlined herein, provided such exceptions are reasonably related to the quality of service rendered.

Policy MC-2: Member Education Policy

Purpose:

- To fulfill the cooperative commitment to education as stated in internationally recognized cooperative principles (International Co-operative Alliance, 1995)
- To achieve the education “ends goal” of TPSS Co-op
- To spread information about co-ops among employees, member-owners and the general public
- To disseminate information about healthy diet and healthy living
- To provide information about environmental issues relevant to TPSS Co-op
- To promote a sense of Co-op community

Potential Forms of Education

TPSS Co-op can use a wide variety of means to promote member education. These may include:

- On-line educational materials/displays
- In-store workshops (or sponsored at a nearby site)
- Orientation material: both for new employees and for new member-owners
- Handbooks/manuals that illustrate Co-op values
- Guest speakers, either in-store or at a co-sponsored event
- In-store cooking demonstrations, either in-store or at a co-sponsored event
- Classes (either in-store or at well publicized off-store site)
- Educational presentations at membership-wide events
- In-store educational materials/displays
- Brochures
- Newsletter articles pertaining to co-op education goals

Education Plan

TPSS Co-op shall have an education plan to enable Co-op member-owners to become more knowledgeable about their Co-op, the Co-op movement, and health and environmental issues relevant to TPSS Co-op. Co-op staff shall have the discretion, in consultation with the Membership Committee, to develop appropriate educational goals and objectives (which will likely draw on the forms of education outlined above) and shall report on what these goals and objectives are — as well as report on progress to achieving those goals, on an annual basis. The education plan may be incorporated into the outreach plan.

Policy MC-3: Communications Policy

Purpose:

- To have an effective outreach protocol to communicate Co-op information to members
- To promote communication with members through a variety of media
- To promote the Co-op and a sense of Co-op community
- To promote member-owner involvement in the governance of TPSS Co-op
- To promote effective official communication of the Co-op to external organizations (e.g., city government, press, business associations, co-op associations, etc.)
- To provide product, health, and environmental impact information to Co-op members

Legal Considerations

Both State of Maryland law and TPSS Co-op Bylaws require that cooperatives provide specific information to Co-op members, including annual financial reports and budgets, notice of meetings, solicitation of nominations, notice of elections, publication of election results, and other pertinent governance issues.

Potential Forms of Communication

TPSS Co-op can use a wide variety of mechanisms to communicate with members. These may include:

- Bulletin board
- TPSS Newsletter
- TPSS Web site
- Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)
- Ads in local media (e.g.: Takoma/Silver Spring Voice, City of Takoma Park newsletter)
- Signs outside the stores
- E-mail listserv
- Co-op calendar in the stores
- Register tapes
- Partner organization calendars and listservs
- Public announcement at Takoma Park City Council meeting
- Leaflet or handout (for example, at Takoma Metro)
- Register flyer

TPSS Co-op is committed to using the forms of communication listed above to make sure that member-owners are aware of the different avenues of communication that they may use to make their needs, views, and voice heard in an effective manner.

Outreach Protocol

TPSS Co-op shall have an outreach protocol to enable Co-op member-owners to effectively participate in Co-op governance and be well informed in general about important Co-op matters. Co-op staff shall have the discretion to develop appropriate outreach protocols (which will likely draw on the list of media outlined above) and shall report what these protocols are to the Board.

Web, Newsletter, In-Store Signage, and Other Co-op Communications

Co-op communicators shall endeavor to meet the goals of this policy: in particular, to foster a strong sense of Co-op community; provide product, nutritional, and environmental impact information; and promote the good governance of the Co-op.

Official Communications

The Board reserves final authority to represent the Co-op to all external organizations. The Board may choose, at its discretion, to delegate said authority to management, officers, individual Board members, or authorized representatives.

Co-op Encouragement of Communication by Members

TPSS Co-op encourages TPSS Co-op member-owners to communicate their views to TPSS Co-op, including through the following means:

- a) Letters
- b) Electronic mail
- c) Open-member forum at the beginning of Board meetings
- d) Participation in committee meetings (with meeting agendas posted in advance in the stores and on the TPSS Co-op website).
- e) Suggestion boxes (both physical boxes and via electronic boxes on the website) to enable members to submit comments or complaints
- f) In-store discussion of issues with Co-op officials or management
- g) Letters to the TPSS newsletter editor.

TPSS Co-op is committed to being responsive to the communications it receives from member-owners and aims to reply to each such communication in a timely manner.

Policy MC-4: Outreach and Member Recruitment

Purpose:

- To be engaged with the larger community
- To realize the international co-op principle of concern for community
- To promote access to lower-income families and diverse communities of Takoma Park and Silver Spring
- To educate the broader community about Co-op values, healthful living and sustainability
- To retain member-owners and keep them engaged in the Co-op
- To maintain and expand TPSS Co-op's member-owner base
- To encourage community members to become shoppers and ultimately member-owners of TPSS co-op

Types of Outreach

1. Community education. Examples include:
 - a. Co-op education programs in public schools
 - b. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) fairs and other events that raise awareness about local and sustainable agriculture.
2. Member and customer education. Examples include:
 - a. Educational displays or signage in the store.
 - b. Educational newsletter articles about cooperative principles, nutrition, sustainability, etc.
3. Community building. Examples include:
 - a. Networking and cooperation with other community organizations.
 - b. Participation in community events: e.g., Earth Day Celebration, 4th of July parade, Takoma Park Jazz Festival, Silver Spring Jazz Festival, Takoma Park Folk Festival, Takoma Park Street Festival
 - c. Family friendly events such as story time hour and the annual Harvest Celebration/Pumpkin Painting.

Outreach and Member Recruitment Plan

TPSS Co-op shall have an outreach plan to recruit and retain member-owners, conduct outreach to the greater community, and enable Co-op member-owners to become more involved in TPSS Co-op. Co-op staff shall have the discretion, in consultation with the Membership Committee, to develop appropriate outreach goals and objectives (which will likely draw on the forms of outreach outlined above) and shall report on what these goals and objectives are — as well as report on progress to achieving those goals— on an annual basis.

Metrics for Success

In developing the [TPSS Co-op Outreach and Recruitment Plan, TPSS Co-op shall consider:

- Absolute number of member-owners
- Member-owner sales as a percentage of total sales
- Absolute number and percentage of member-owners participating in TPSS Co-op events
- Absolute number and percentage of member-owners volunteering for TPSS Co-op
- Percentage of member-owners voting in annual TPSS Co-op elections
- Survey data on how well TPSS Co-op is serving the community
- Level of use of supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) by Co-op shoppers
- Absolute number of participants in Co-op outreach events or programs.

Policy MC-5: Diversity and Accessibility Policy

Purpose:

- To enjoy the full diversity and richness of the Takoma Park and Silver Spring communities
- To enlist diverse talents for the benefit of TPSS Co-op
- To encompass the broad range of perspectives that are present in the Takoma Park and Silver Spring communities
- To ensure equal access to the economic benefits of cooperation
- To realize the international co-op principle of open membership
- To provide opportunities for personal growth and social change that comes from interacting with people from a full range of backgrounds

Practices to Promote Accessibility and Diversity

1. Ensuring physical access to the stores for people of different abilities.
2. Having signage readable in the language(s) of TPSS Co-op shoppers and member-owners.
3. Having a staff, board, and volunteers reflective of the diversity of the Takoma Park and Silver Spring communities.
4. Recruiting member-owners and shoppers from a wide range of communities.
5. Maintaining a Co-op culture that is welcoming to diverse communities.
6. Making available training and education resources regarding diversity (e.g., diversity trainings).
7. Events that mentor leaders in under-represented communities.
8. Provide healthy and sustainable food and products serving a wide range of cultures.
9. Advertising and outreach to community groups.

Diversity and Accessibility Plan

TPSS Co-op shall have a diversity and accessibility plan. Co-op staff shall have the discretion, in consultation with the Membership Committee, to develop appropriate diversity and accessibility goals and objectives (which will likely draw on the forms of outreach outlined above) and shall report on what these goals and objectives are — as well as report on progress to achieving those goals— on an annual basis.

Metrics for Success

In developing the TPSS Diversity and Accessibility Plan, TPSS Co-op shall consider:

- Being in compliance with ADA
- Diversity in leadership at the staff and Board levels (race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)
- Diversity among volunteers and at public events where TPSS Co-op is represented
- Membership survey data on racial, gender, and ethnic identities
- Level of use of supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) by Co-op shoppers

Policy MC-6: Privacy and Data-Security Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect the TPSS Co-op from loss or liability due to unsecured data, to prevent unauthorized use of or access to confidential information, and to protect the privacy of Co-op members, investors, volunteers, staff, and customers.

Scope and Definitions

TPSS Co-op recognizes that certain information is collected in the normal course of business, which must be secured and kept private, including personally identifiable information. At least five classes of information fall into the general category of information that must be secured and kept private or confidential:

- 1) Member information
- 2) Staff and volunteer information
- 3) Customer information
- 4) Proprietary information
- 5) Discussions held during closed or executive sessions of the TPSS Board of Representatives

In order to protect the above five classes of information, TPSS Co-op must ensure that its data is secure. To be secure, information must be protected against access by unauthorized individuals or agencies. Data regarding information of all classes must be protected from loss due to:

- 1) Theft
- 2) Being misplaced, discarded or destroyed
- 3) Fire
- 4) Data-corruption, electronic failure or obsolescence
- 5) Irrecoverable encryption or loss of passwords
- 6) Failure to protect and periodically change passwords

Policy Directives

Management shall develop well-defined, written administrative policies and procedures to ensure the necessary degree of privacy and confidentiality for each of the five classes of information described above and to ensure data security. Such policies and procedures shall then be submitted to the Board for approval.

These policies and procedures shall:

- 1) Direct and document the steps taken to secure each class of data.
- 2) Describe how secured information will be identified as such.
- 3) Define when confidentiality agreements must be executed to gain access to information.
- 4) Prohibit the sale or disclosure of customer information or marketing data, such as shopping-pattern data, to outside individuals or agencies without specific Board authorization.
- 5) Define which individuals shall have access to specified data of all classes and how authorization for access will be granted and revoked.
- 6) Provide for the maintenance of records on the individuals that have access to each class of secured information, including the dates of the grants and revocations of access rights, and on other issues related to privacy and data security.
- 7) Define how inappropriate access to secured information by persons whose relationship with TPSS Co-op has terminated, lapsed or changed is to be prevented.
- 8) In the case of the policy or policies addressing data security, define the nature of acceptable passwords, encryption, back-ups or other data-security systems, including how often back-ups are performed for each class of secured data; how often passwords, encryption keys and other protections are changed for security purposes; and how administrative records of passwords and encryption keys are to be maintained and secured.