

Co-op Principles

Co-operative Principles for housing co-ops

On September 23, 1995, the International Co-operative Alliance, the body representing co-operatives worldwide, adopted new co-operative principles.

They appear in short form below:

1. Open membership

Co-ops are open without exception to anyone who needs their services and freely accepts the obligations of membership.

2. Democratic control

Co-ops are controlled by their members, who together set policy, make decisions and elect leaders who report to them. In primary co-ops each member has one vote.

3. Economic participation

All members contribute fairly to their co-ops, which they own in common. Co-ops pay a limited return (if any) on money people have to invest to become members. Surpluses are held for the future and used to improve the co-op's services.

4. Independence

All agreements co-ops sign with outside organizations or governments should leave the members in control of the co-op.

5. Co-operative education

Co-ops offer training to their members, directors and staff. Co-ops tell the public what they are and what they do.

6. Co-operation among co-operatives

Co-ops work together through local, national and international structures to serve their members.

7. Community

Co-ops meet members' needs in ways that build lasting communities inside and outside each co-op.

Housing co-ops offer several advantages to members:

1. Affordability

Housing co-ops are member-owned and controlled organizations. The monthly housing charges are set by the members to cover the costs of running the co-op.

2. Governance

Governance is about the overall direction of the co-op and is the job of directors and members of the co-op. Co-ops are democratically run and each member has a vote. Members elect the board of directors, approve the annual budget and set policy.

3. Security of tenure

A member's right to live in the co-op is protected. A member can live in the co-op for as long as he or she wishes as long as he or she follows the rules (By-Laws) of the co-op and pays his or her housing charge on time.

4. Community

Housing co-ops can also be strong communities, where members actively participate in the business of the co-op. In addition to standard tasks, such as approving the annual budget, members often volunteer with maintenance tasks and are involved in other community-based projects.

(from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)