

Willimantic Food Co-Op Policy Register Table of Contents

Policy	Schedule	Revision History
A. Ends Policy		
A.1 Global Ends	Mar	May 7, 2026
B. Executive Limitations		
B.1 Staff Treatment and Compensation	July	
B.2 Financial Planning	Jan	May 5, 2024; May 4, 2017
B.3 Financial Condition and Activities	Feb; May; Aug; Nov	Jan 3, 2019
B.4 Asset Protection	Dec	May 4, 2017; Nov 6, 2014
B.5 Communication and Counsel to Board	Sept	
B.6 Emergency Management Succession	Apr	
B.7 Customer Service and Value	Jun	
B.8 Membership	Oct	Dec 5, 2024; Dec 2, 2023
B.9 Board Logistical Support	Sept	Jan 5, 2012
C. Board-General Manager Relationship		
C.1 Unity of Control	Jan	
C.2 Accountability of the Manager	Feb	
C.3 Delegation to the Manager	Mar	
C.4 Monitoring Manager Performance	Apr	
D. Board Process		
D.1 Governing Style	July	
D.2 The Board's Job	Aug	
D.3 Agenda Planning	Sept	Apr 3, 2025
D.4 Board Meetings	Oct	Apr 3, 2025
D.5 Director's Code of Conduct	June	Sep 5, 2024
D.6 Officer's Role	Nov	Jan 7, 2016; Jan 5, 2012
D.7 Board Committee Principles	May	
D.8 Governance Investment	Dec	

POLICY A: ENDS

The Willimantic Food Co-op exists so that its members, shoppers and the greater community have access to a cooperatively-owned, financially viable grocery store.

Because the co-op exists:

- Our community has increased access to quality food that meets their needs.
- Our community has an inclusive and accessible space to shop and gather, where everyone is welcomed, respected, and valued.
- Employees earn a livable wage in an equitable and safe environment in which they can thrive.
- Our local, regional, and global food systems are more resilient, sustainable, and ethical.
- Environmental impact is reduced through conscientious business practices and sustainable consumer options.

POLICY B: EXECUTIVE LIMITATIONS

The General Manager will not cause nor allow any practice, activity, decision or organizational circumstance that is either unlawful, imprudent, or in violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics, or that violates our cooperative values and principles.

POLICY B.1: STAFF TREATMENT AND COMPENSATION

The General Manager will not treat staff in any way that is unfair, unsafe, or unclear.

The General Manager will not:

1. Operate without written personnel policies that:
 - a. Clarify rules for staff.
 - b. Provide for fair and thorough handling of grievances.
 - c. Are accessible to all employees.
 - d. Inform staff that employment is neither permanent nor guaranteed.
2. Cause or allow personnel policies to be inconsistently applied.
3. Provide for inadequate documentation, security and retention of personnel records and all personnel related decisions.
4. Establish compensation and benefits that are internally or externally inequitable.
5. Change the General Manager's own compensation and benefits, except as his or her benefits are consistent with a package for all other employees.

POLICY B.2: FINANCIAL PLANNING

The General Manager will not operate without annual budgets and multi-year plans that strengthen operations and support achievement of the Ends.

1. The General Manager will not cause or allow plans that:
 - a) Risk incurring those situations or conditions described as unacceptable in the Board policy “Financial Condition and Activities Policy B.3.”
 - b) Omit disclosure of planning assumptions.
 - c) Omit credible projection of: revenues and expenses, owner investment and return, capital versus operational items, cash flow, or debt service.
 - d) Provide less for Board prerogatives during the year than is set forth in the Board budget.
 - e) Are not updated annually.
2. The General Manager will not fail to review the budget with the Board during the first quarter of the fiscal year.

POLICY B.3: FINANCIAL CONDITION and ACTIVITIES

With respect to operating the cooperative in a sound and prudent manner, the General Manager may not jeopardize the long-term financial health of the cooperative. The General Manager shall not cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or material deviation of actual expenditures from Board priorities established in Ends policies.

The General Manager will not:

1. Allow sales to decline or be stagnant where we believe the market has potential for growth.
2. Allow operations to generate a net income inadequate to meet the expected needs of the Co-op in the current fiscal year and to provide long-term support for its Ends.
3. Allow liquidity, or the ability to meet cash needs in a timely and efficient fashion, to be insufficient.
4. Allow solvency, or the relationship of debt to member/owners’ equity, to be insufficient.
5. Incur debt other than trade payables or other reasonable and customary liabilities incurred in the ordinary course of doing business.
6. Acquire, encumber or dispose of real estate.
7. Allow tax payments or other government-ordered payments or filings to be overdue or inaccurately filed.
8. Allow late payment of contract, payroll, loans or other financial obligations.
9. Use restricted funds for any purpose other than that required by the restriction.
10. Allow financial record keeping systems to be inadequate or out of conformity with GAAP.

POLICY B.4: ASSET PROTECTION

The General Manager will not cause or allow the cooperative’s assets to be unprotected,

inadequately maintained, or unnecessarily risked.

Accordingly, the General Manager will not:

1. Allow equipment and facilities to be inadequately insured or otherwise be unable to be replaced if damaged or destroyed, including coverage for any losses incurred due to business interruption.
2. Allow unnecessary exposure to liability or lack of insurance protection from claims of liability.
3. Allow inadequate security of premises and property.
4. Allow data, intellectual property, or files to be unprotected from loss, theft or significant damage.
5. Allow improper usage of members' and customers' personal information.
6. Allow uncontrolled purchasing or purchasing subject to conflicts of interest.
7. Allow lack of due diligence in contracts.
8. Allow damage to the Cooperative's public image.
9. Make capital expenditures, sell capital assets or enter into leases not included in the budget exceeding \$25,000 in value without Board approval. If an emergency situation requires an unplanned purchase of assets above the said amount, the General Manager will report it at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

POLICY B.5: COMMUNICATION AND COUNSEL TO THE BOARD

With respect to providing information and counsel to the Board, the General Manager may not cause or allow the Board to be uninformed or misinformed.

Accordingly, the General Manager may not fail to:

1. Make the Board aware of relevant trends, public events of the organization, or internal and external changes that affect the assumptions upon which Board policy has previously been submitted.
2. Provide accurate, timely and understandable monitoring reports and related data.
3. Report actual or anticipated non-compliance with Ends or Executive Limitations policies.
4. Advise the board if, in the General Manager's opinion, the board or one of its members is not in compliance with the board's policies on Board process or Board/General Manager Relationship.

POLICY B.6: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUCCESSION

To protect the Board from sudden loss of General Manager Services, the General Manager shall not have less than one other manager sufficiently familiar with Board and General Manager issues and processes to enable her/him to take over with reasonable proficiency as an interim successor.

To ensure this, the General Manager will not fail to:

1. Maintain an updated emergency succession plan and notify the board of any changes to the plan.

POLICY B.7: CUSTOMER SERVICE AND VALUE

The General Manager will not fail to offer good value in our products and services.

Accordingly, s/he may not fail to:

1. Provide high quality products as inexpensively as possible.
2. Provide education and information concerning nutrition and agricultural practices with the aim of supporting alternative patterns of production, consumption and use.
3. Ensure that all merchandising and marketing practices be honest.
4. Provide a safe and pleasant shopping experience for our customers.
5. Establish and operate a system for soliciting and considering customer opinion regarding preferences, product requests, complaints and suggestions.

POLICY B.8: MEMBERSHIP

In order to promote a vital membership program that builds a sense of ownership and invites participation among members, the general manager will not:

1. Fail to ensure maintenance of accurate and current member records including, but not limited to, name, addresses, equity payments, and eligibility for benefits and voting.
2. Fail to exercise discretion in the use of aforementioned member records.
3. Change the membership equity requirement.
4. Fail to provide benefits exclusive and meaningful to members.
5. Fail to provide opportunities for members to participate in the cooperative.
6. Fail to make adequate membership information and application materials readily available.
7. Fail to regularly publish a newsletter.

POLICY B.9: BOARD LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

In order to support the board in fulfilling its duties and responsibilities, the GM shall not fail to:

1. Provide adequate information and notice to members concerning Board actions, meetings, elections, activities and events, as directed by the Board.
2. Maintain an updated and current copy of the Board Policy Register and Bylaws at the same store location and on-line for viewing by Coop members.
3. Provide support for board meetings, retreats, member/annual or special meetings:
 - a. Arrange for a meeting location sufficient to comfortably and safely accommodate meetings.
 - b. Assist the Board in procuring a volunteer scribe from the membership.
4. Assure that all official board records are safely archived for a period consistent with legal requirements.

POLICY C: BOARD-GENERAL MANAGER RELATIONSHIP

The Board's official connection to the operational aspects of the Cooperative, its achievements, conduct, and staff will be through the General Manager.

POLICY C.1: UNITY OF CONTROL

Only officially passed motions of the Board are binding on the GM.

1. Decisions or instructions of individual directors, officers, or committees are not binding on the GM except in rare instances when the Board has specifically authorized this power.
2. In the case of directors or committees requesting information or assistance without Board authorization, the GM can refuse any requests that, in the GM's opinion, may disrupt operations or that require too much staff time or resources.

POLICY C.2: ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE MANAGER

The General Manager is the Board's only link to operational achievement and conduct.

1. The Board will view GM performance as identical to organizational performance so that the Cooperative's accomplishment of Board-stated ends and avoidance of Board-proscribed means will be viewed as successful GM performance.
2. The Board will not instruct or evaluate any employee other than the GM.

POLICY C.3: DELEGATION TO THE MANAGER

The Board delegates authority to the GM through written Ends and Executive Limitations policies.

1. As long as the GM uses any reasonable interpretation of the Board's Ends and Executive Limitations policies, the GM is authorized to establish all further policies, practices and plans for the cooperative.
2. The Board will respect and support the GM's choices as long as those choices are based on reasonable interpretations of Board policies.

3. If the Board changes an Ends or Executive Limitations policy, the change only applies in the future.

POLICY C.4: MONITORING MANAGER PERFORMANCE

The Board will systematically and rigorously monitor and evaluate the GM's job performance. Monitoring is how the Board determines the degree to which the GM is following Board policies. Information that does not directly relate to Ends or Executive Limitations policies is not monitoring information.

1. The Board will acquire monitoring information by one or more of three methods: (a) by internal report, in which the GM discloses interpretations and compliance information to the Board; (b) by external report, in which an external, disinterested third party selected by the Board assesses compliance with Board policies; or (c) by direct Board inspection, in which a designated director or committee assesses compliance with the policy criteria.
2. In every case, the standard for compliance will be any reasonable GM interpretation (as described by operational definitions and metrics) of the Board policy being monitored. The Board is the final arbiter of reasonableness but will always judge with a "reasonable person" test rather than with interpretations favored by individual directors or by the Board as a whole.
3. The GM is compliant with a policy if he/she presents a reasonable interpretation and adequate data that demonstrate accomplishment of that interpretation.
4. The Board will monitor all policies that instruct the GM. The Board can monitor any policy at any time by any method but will ordinarily follow the schedule outlined in the Board Annual Calendar.
5. Within 3 months after each anniversary of the General Manager's start date, the Board will perform an evaluation of the General Manager, based on a summary of monitoring reports received during the 12 months leading up to that anniversary. The Board will also complete the GM compensation review process and make its decisions concerning compensation within these same 3 months.

POLICY D: BOARD PROCESS

The Board of Directors act as trustees on behalf of the members' ownership interest in the Cooperative and shall assure that the purpose, mission and principles of the Cooperative are properly carried out on behalf of the membership. The Board has fiduciary and legal responsibility to the members.

POLICY D.1: GOVERNING STYLE

We will govern in a way that emphasizes empowerment and clear accountability. In order to do this, we will:

1. Focus our vision outward and toward the future;
2. Observe the 10 Policy Governance principles;
3. Maintain group discipline, authority and responsibility;

4. Clearly distinguish Board and General Manager roles;
5. Encourage diverse viewpoints;
6. Obey all relevant laws and bylaws.

POLICY D.2: THE BOARD'S JOB

In order to govern successfully, we will:

1. Create and sustain a meaningful relationship with member-owners.
2. Hire, compensate, delegate responsibility to, and hold accountable a General Manager. (See C. Board GM Relationship Policies)
3. Have expectations in the form of written governing policies that realistically address the broadest levels of all organizational decisions and situations. We will write these policies in the form of Ends, Executive Limitations, Board Process, and Board-Management Relationship, as described in the Policy Governance principles.
4. Monitor operational performance in the areas of Ends and Executive Limitations, and Board performance in the areas of Board Process and Board-Management Relationship.
5. Perpetuate the Board's leadership capacity using ongoing education, training and recruitment.

POLICY D.3: AGENDA PLANNING

We will follow a strategic work plan and annual agenda that focuses our attention toward the future and away from operational details.

1. We will maintain an annual calendar that includes tasks and events related to our work plan, membership meetings, Board training schedule, monitoring schedule, and the GM evaluation and compensation decisions as outlined in our Board-Management Relationship policies.
2. Board meeting agendas will be determined by the Board Chair, and may be modified at the meeting by a majority vote of the Board.

POLICY D.4: BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are for the task of getting the Board's job done.

1. We will use Board meeting time only for work that is the whole Board's responsibility, avoiding topics that are not the best use of our time.
2. Meetings will be open to the membership except when executive session is officially called.
 1. We may occasionally use executive session to deal with confidential matters, as long as the purpose of the session is stated. When possible, announcement of the executive session should be on the published agenda.
3. We will seek agreement through discussion. We will then finalize and document decisions through the use of motions, seconds and majority vote.

4. If we must make a decision outside of a regular meeting, we will follow our bylaws, include everyone, and ensure that it is properly documented.

POLICY D.5: DIRECTOR'S CODE OF CONDUCT

We each commit ourselves to ethical, businesslike and lawful conduct.

1. Directors are responsible at all times for acting in good faith, in a manner which they reasonably believe to be in the best interests of the Cooperative, and with such care as an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances.
2. Directors must demonstrate unconflicted loyalty to the interests of the Cooperative's owners. This accountability supersedes any conflicting loyalty such as that to advocacy or interest groups, membership on other Boards or staffs, and the personal interest of any director acting as an individual consumer or member.
 1. There will be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any director and the Cooperative except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity and equal access to "inside" information.
 2. When the Board is to decide on an issue about which a director has an unavoidable conflict of interest, that director shall abstain from the conversation and the vote.
 3. A consumer director who applies to become an employee of the Cooperative must resign from the Board.
 4. Any director who is also a paid employee of the Cooperative has the same duties and responsibilities as any other director, and has the additional duty of clearly segregating staff and Board responsibilities. Any such director will resign from the Board if and when their employment ends.
3. Directors may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the organization.
 1. When interacting with the GM or employees, directors must carefully and openly recognize their lack of authority.
 2. When interacting with the public, the press, or other entities, directors must recognize the same limitation and the inability of any director to speak for the Board except to repeat explicitly stated Board decisions.
4. Directors will respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature and must continue to honor confidentiality after leaving Board service.
5. Directors will prepare for and attend all Board meetings and training events.
6. Directors will remain members in good standing of the Cooperative for the duration of their tenure on the Board.
7. Directors will support the legitimacy and authority of the Board's decision on any matter, irrespective of the director's personal position on the issue.
8. In accepting a seat on the Board, a director agrees to resign immediately in the event that they are found by a 2/3 majority vote of the remaining Board to have violated this code of conduct.

POLICY D.6: OFFICER'S ROLE

We will elect officers in order to help us accomplish our job.

1. No officer has any authority to supervise or direct the GM.
2. Officers may delegate their responsibilities, as outlined in the bylaws, but will remain accountable for seeing these responsibilities carried out.
3. The president ensures the Board acts consistently with Board policies.
 - a. The president is authorized to use any reasonable interpretation of the provisions in the Board Process and Board-Management Relationship policies.
 - b. The president will chair and set the agenda for Board meetings in collaboration with the General Manager.
 - c. The president plans for leadership (officer) perpetuation.
 - d. The president may represent the Board to outside parties.
4. The vice-president will perform the duties of the president in her/his absence.
5. The treasurer will lead the Board's process for creating and monitoring the Board's (not the Cooperative's) budget in addition to all responsibilities outlined in bylaws.
6. The secretary will:
 - a. Make sure the Board's documents are accurate, up to date, and appropriately maintained in addition to all responsibilities outline in bylaws.
 - b. Provide Board Members with an updated copy of the Policy Register and the Bylaws.
 - c. Ensure that a notice of upcoming Board meetings, including their time and place, is prominently displayed within the store not less than 10 days before each meeting.
 - d. Ensure that a set of Board meeting minutes from the last 12 months is available in a prominent store location.
 - e. Prepare and provide a copy of the Board-meeting packet to all Board members.

POLICY D.7: BOARD COMMITTEE PRINCIPLES

We will use Board committees only to help us accomplish our job.

1. Committees will reinforce and support the wholeness of the Board.
2. Board committees may not speak or act for the Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes.
3. The Board will establish, regularly review and control committee responsibilities.

POLICY D.8: GOVERNANCE INVESTMENT

We will invest in the Board's governance capacity.

1. We will make sure that Board skills, methods and supports are sufficient to allow us to govern with excellence.
2. We will incur governance costs prudently, though not at the expense of endangering the development and maintenance of superior capability.
 - a. We will use training and retraining liberally to orient new directors and candidates for membership, as well as to maintain and increase existing directors' skills and understanding.
 - b. We will arrange outside monitoring assistance as necessary so that the Board can exercise confident control over organizational performance.
 - c. We will use outreach mechanisms as needed to ensure our ability to listen to owner viewpoints and values.
 - d. We will use professional and administrative support.
3. We will develop the Board's annual budget in a timely way so as to not interfere with the development of the Cooperative's annual budget. In no case will we complete this work later than October 1.