

Community
FOOD CO'OP

Strategic Plan 2024-2028



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The Foundation

Our Vision

A just and livable world with cooperatively owned enterprise as a cornerstone of a sustainable economy.

Our Mission

Consumer-owned grocery stores serving our community with quality products and honest information.

Our Values

We are committed to maintaining the economic viability of the Co-op in order to:

- Promote cooperative ownership by fostering member involvement and responding to member needs.
- Build community by respecting diversity and cultivating connections within the Co-op and Whatcom County.
- Encourage informed choices by educating ourselves and our community on issues of food, healthy lifestyles, the environment, and human rights.
- Model ethical business and employment practices by acting with honesty, integrity, and respect in the workplace and marketplace.
- Promote a sustainable economy by supporting organic and sustainable food production and other environmentally and socially responsible businesses locally, regionally, and nationally.

Our Long-Range Goals

We are committed to steady progress toward these goals over the next five years:

- Our members own a successful cooperative business that meets their needs and engages them to continuously strengthen their Co-op.
- Our Co-op is the best place to buy local and organic food, and plays an essential role in building a stronger local food system.
- Our staff are proud to be a part of creating a positive, innovative workplace where workers and customers feel valued and respected.
- Our community relies on the Co-op as a place where people of different incomes, viewpoints, and identities can easily access healthy and nutritious food.
- Our shoppers know that when they buy food through the Co-op, they are contributing to the larger effort to build a sustainable and resilient community.

How This Plan Was Developed



Members discuss the Co-op's values at our 2023 Annual Meeting in Bellingham.

In 2023, the Co-op's democratically elected Board of Directors embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process. We launched the process at our Annual Meeting in the spring and spent the next nine months gathering data. We assessed current market conditions, reviewed the new Whatcom County Food System Plan and the most recent Whatcom County ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained) Report. We conducted a Co-op member survey, receiving 1,008 responses, and compared our results to other co-ops around the country. We also conducted focus groups with members, community partners, farmers, and staff. With this information, our Board's strategic planning committee articulated key priorities for the Co-op to meet our members' needs, uphold our core values, and continue to serve our community in a highly competitive marketplace.

Each of our long-range goals, as above, are the desired results we are aiming for, and we have identified the key strategies to help us achieve each goal. Our five-year Strategic Plan builds on our strengths but is also ambitious. We certainly don't expect that it will all be achieved in the first year! We are committed, however, to steady progress.

As we implement this plan, we trust that you will continue to share your feedback and suggestions. Co-ops survive — and thrive — because of the passion, creativity, and commitment of their members. This co-op belongs to you!



Members share ideas for the Co-op's strategic plan at our 2023 Annual Meeting in Bellingham.



Laura Weiss, Community Food Co-op Board Chair, speaks at the Co-op's 2024 Annual Meeting in Bellingham.

1

Cooperative Ownership

Goal

Our members own a successful cooperative business that meets their needs and engages them to continuously strengthen their Co-op.

Strategies

- Provide welcoming, vibrant, and friendly stores where people enjoy coming to shop, eat, learn, and gather.
- Educate people about the co-op difference and ensure that members are engaged, feel connected, and know that their input matters.
- Measure results, celebrate successes, and share both with staff, customers, vendors, and the community.



Modesto Hernandez Leal, co-founder and worker-owner of Cooperativa Tierra y Libertad in Everson, tends to blueberry bushes.

2

Strong Local Food Systems

Goal

Our Co-op is the best place to buy local and organic food, and plays an essential role in building a stronger local food system.

Strategies

- Be a trusted source of information about why buying wholesome and sustainably grown food matters to the health of people and the planet.
- Steadily increase the amount, consistency, and variety of local products sold through our stores.
- Develop and implement a plan for how to leverage our Farm Fund, in coordination with operations to build the capacity of local farmers to sell through our Co-op.



A staff member assists a customer at the Co-op's Cordata location.

3

Exemplary Workplace

Goal

Our staff are proud to be a part of creating a positive, innovative workplace where workers and customers feel valued and respected.

Strategies

- Cultivate a culture of trust, cooperation, learning, and innovation at every level of the organization.
- Ensure that staff and managers have the support they need to provide exceptional customer service, working together as an informed, confident team.
- Recognize the good work of our employees by providing competitive wages and benefits while upholding our values and keeping our Co-op fiscally sound.



The Co-op prioritizes locally grown produce and maintains a selection that is 90 percent organic.

4

Healthy Food Access

Goal

Our community relies on the Co-op as a place where people of different incomes, viewpoints, and identities can easily access healthy and nutritious food.

Strategies

- Offer a range of healthy options on our shelves and in the deli that meet various income levels and household sizes.
- Research, develop, and act upon strategies for reaching underserved communities throughout Whatcom County.
- Expand and promote customer access to buying in bulk and food access programs, so that our customers can save money and eat well.



Ecotech Solar installs the 154-panel solar array on the roof of the Co-op's administrative building in Bellingham.

5

Sustainable Community

Goal

Our shoppers know that when they buy food through the Co-op, they are contributing to the larger effort to build a sustainable and resilient community.

Strategies

- Continuously improve the Co-op's sustainability practices (such as energy efficiency and waste reduction) and help our members make sustainable choices.
- Identify and highlight advocacy opportunities for the membership around issues such as climate change that affect the co-op business, healthy food access, and local agriculture.
- Partner with organizations that preserve and protect farmland and champion food system initiatives.