



POLICY REGISTER

Whole Foods Co-op
Duluth, Minnesota

As Amended by the Board of Directors on
June 23, 2025

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Policy Type:	Ends
Policy Title:	A – Ends
Last Revised:	June 23, 2025

To assist the General Manager in the decision-making process, the following values reflect our vision:

With Whole Foods Co-op, our community is better connected, our food system is resilient, and our regional economy is thriving.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in August.

Policy Type:	Executive Limitations
Policy Title:	B – Global Executive Constraint
Last Revised:	September 26, 2022

The General Manager must not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is unlawful, oppressive, unjust, imprudent, or contrary to the Cooperative Principles.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in January.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B1 – Financial Condition and Activities
Last revised: September 26, 2022

With respect to the actual, ongoing financial conditions and activities, the General Manager must not cause or allow the Cooperative to be unprepared for future opportunities, the development of fiscal jeopardy, or key operational indicators to be below average for our industry.

The General Manager must not:

1. Allow sales growth to be inadequate.
2. Allow operations to generate an inadequate EBITDAP (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, amortization, and patronage rebates), and net income.
3. Allow liquidity (the ability to meet cash needs in a timely and efficient fashion) to be insufficient.
4. Allow solvency (the relationship of debt to equity) to be insufficient.
5. Allow growth in ownership and owner paid-in equity to be insufficient.
6. Allow tax payments or other government-ordered payments or filings to be overdue or inaccurately filed.
7. Default on any terms that are part of the Cooperative's financial obligations.
8. Allow late payment of contracts, payroll, loans, or other financial obligations.
9. Incur debt other than trade payables or other reasonable and customary liabilities incurred in the ordinary course of doing business.
10. Acquire, encumber, or dispose of real estate or enter into long-term real estate leases.
11. Use restricted funds for any purpose other than that required by the restriction.
12. Allow financial record-keeping systems and financial controls to be inadequate or out of conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in January, April, July, and November.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B2 –Planning and Financial Budgeting
Last revised: September 26, 2022

The General Manager must not operate without annual and multi-year plans and budgets that address intentional and improved Ends accomplishments and strengthening operations.

The General Manager must not:

1. Create plans or budgets that:
 - a. Risk incurring those situations or conditions described as unacceptable in the Board policy “Financial Condition and Activities.”
 - b. Omit planning assumptions.
 - c. Omit credible projection of revenues and expenses, owner investment and return, separation of capital and operational items, cash flow, and debt service.
 - d. Do not pursue excellence in business systems and operations.
 - e. Have not been tested for feasibility.
2. Provide less for Board prerogatives during the year than is outlined in the board budget.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in June.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B3 – Asset Protection
Last revised: September 26, 2022

The General Manager must not allow assets to be unprotected, unreasonably risked, or inadequately maintained.

The General Manager must not:

1. Allow inadequate insurance for facilities, equipment, and business interruption.
2. Allow unnecessary exposure to liability or lack of insurance protection from claims of liability.
3. Allow deposits or investments to be unreasonably risked.
4. Allow inadequate security of premises and property.
5. Allow data, intellectual property, or files to be unprotected from loss, theft, or significant damage.
 - a) Allow improper usage of owners' and customers' personal information.
6. Allow purchasing that is uncontrolled or subject to conflicts of interest.
7. Allow lack of due diligence in contracts.
8. Allow damage to the Cooperative's public image.
 - a) Operate without a crisis communications plan that includes communication protocols for the board.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in February.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B4 – Ownership Rights and Responsibilities
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The General Manager must not allow owners to be without opportunities for meaningful participation.

The General Manager must not:

1. Allow owners to be uninformed or misinformed of their benefits, rights, and responsibilities.
2. Allow any individual to become an owner unless that individual meets the eligibility requirements described in our Bylaws and invests the required equity.
3. Create or implement an owner equity system without the following qualities:
 - a. Owners are informed that equity investments are a) at risk, and b) generally refundable, though the Board retains the right to withhold refunds when necessary to protect the Cooperative's financial viability.
 - b. Equity will not be refunded if such refunds would lead to a net decrease in total owner paid-in equity at the end of any reporting period, or would risk, cause, or exacerbate non-compliance with any Financial Condition policy.
4. Implement a patronage dividend system that does not:
 - a. Comply with IRS regulations.
 - b. Allow the Board to examine a range of options and implications, so the Board can make a timely determination each year concerning how much, if any, of the Cooperative's net profit will be allocated and distributed to owners.
5. Allow an owner benefits program that doesn't offer value.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in March.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B5 – Customer Experience
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The General Manager must not be unresponsive to customer needs.

The General Manager must not:

1. Allow a customer experience that is not welcoming and inclusive.
2. Operate without a system for soliciting and considering customer opinions regarding preferences, product requests, complaints, and suggestions.
3. Allow an unsafe shopping experience for our customers.
4. Operate without written policies for handling customer misconduct that include an appropriate range of responses.
 - a. The policies have a goal of de-escalation.
 - b. The policies provide for the use of law enforcement only as necessary.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in August.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B6 - Staff Treatment and Compensation
Last revised: September 26, 2022

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

The General Manager must not:

1. Cause or allow inequitable treatment of applicants and/or employees in regard to race, sex, identity, national origin, primary language, cultural fit, ability, or other factors unrelated to job qualifications and job performance.
2. Operate without policies and practices that attract and retain staff that reflect the diversity of our community.
3. Allow staff to be without training that supports justice and equity.
4. Operate without written personnel policies that:
 - a. Clarify rules for staff.
 - b. Provide for fair and thorough handling of workplace conflicts. The board should not be included as a participant in the conflict resolution process.
 - c. Are accessible to all staff.
 - d. Inform staff that employment is neither permanent nor guaranteed.
 - e. Support employees in reporting unethical or illegal behavior.
 - f. Are applied consistently.
5. Discourage or prevent any employee from reporting unethical or illegal activity to the board or discriminate or retaliate against any employee for reporting unethical or illegal behavior or activity.
6. Provide for inadequate documentation, security, and retention of personnel records and all personnel-related decisions.
7. Establish compensation and benefits that are internally inequitable and not competitive in our market.
8. Change the General Manager's compensation and benefits, except those benefits that are consistent with a package for all other employees.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in May.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B7 – Communication to the Board
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The General Manager must not cause or allow the Board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.

The General Manager must not:

1. Submit monitoring reports that are untimely or inaccurate, or that lack operational definitions (metrics and benchmarks) and verifiable data directly related to each section of the policy.
2. Report in an untimely manner any actual or anticipated noncompliance with any Board policy, along with a plan for reaching compliance and a proposed schedule regarding follow-up reporting.
3. Allow the Board to be unaware of relevant legal actions, media coverage, trends, public events of the Cooperative, or internal and external changes.
4. Withhold from the Board relevant information from or about key partners including NCG, including (but not limited to): reports about industry trends, operational audits, risk assessment, joint liability, program participation, and member agreements.
5. Withhold an opinion if the General Manager believes the Board is not in compliance with its policies on Board Process and Board-Management Relationship, particularly in the case of Board behavior that is detrimental to the working relationship between the Board and the General Manager.
6. Deal with the Board in a way that favors or privileges certain directors over others except when responding to officers or committees duly charged by the Board.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in December.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B8 –Board Logistical Support
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The General Manager must not allow the Board to have inadequate logistical support.

The General Manager must not:

1. Provide the Board with insufficient staff administration to support governance activities and Board communication.
2. Allow the Board to be without a workable mechanism for official board, officer, or committee communications.
3. Allow directors to be without a current copy of the Policy Register and the Bylaws.
4. Provide inadequate information and notice to owners concerning Board actions, meetings, activities, and events.
5. Allow insufficient or inaccessible archiving of board documents.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in July.

Policy Type: Executive Limitations
Policy Title: B9 – Emergency General Manager Succession
Last revised: September 26, 2022

To protect the Cooperative from the sudden loss of General Manager (GM) services, the GM must not have less than one other manager sufficiently familiar with GM responsibilities and Board processes to enable them to take over with reasonable proficiency as an interim successor.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in July.

Policy Type:	Board Process
Policy Title:	C – Global Governance Commitment
Last Revised:	September 26, 2022

Acting on behalf of our owners, the Board ensures the success of Whole Foods Co-op by working together effectively, empowering, and holding accountable professional management, providing strategic leadership for our Cooperative, and perpetuating our democratic organization.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in February.

Policy Type:	Board Process
Policy Title:	C1 – Governing Style
Last Revised:	September 26, 2022

The Board will govern in a manner consistent with the Four Pillars of Cooperative Governance (Teaming, Accountable Empowerment, Strategic Leadership, Democracy).

The Board will:

1. Be a strategic leader by developing insight and foresight to set direction and facilitate movement in that direction.
2. Ensure effective systems of delegating authority to professional management, holding the use of that power accountable, and clearly distinguishing between board and management responsibilities.
3. Work together as a team to achieve a common purpose.
 - a. Maintain discipline, embrace responsibility, and exercise group authority.
4. Practice the habits of a successful democracy.
5. Maintain a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
6. Seek, encourage, and listen to people with a variety of demographic characteristics and diverse perspectives.
7. Use Policy Governance® as our operating system, guiding the work of the Board and the General Manager through written policies.
8. Obey all relevant laws and bylaws.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in February.

Policy Type: Board Process
Policy Title: C2 – The Board’s Job
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The role of the Board is to represent our owners, direct and inspire the cooperative, and ensure appropriate performance.

To govern successfully, The Board will:

1. Practice, protect, promote, and perpetuate a healthy democracy for our Cooperative.
 - a. Establish and maintain communication with owners, educating ourselves on diverse needs and perspectives, and reporting on the Board’s activities and decisions.
2. Hire, set compensation for, delegate responsibility to, and hold accountable a General Manager.
3. Assign responsibility through written policies in a way that honors our commitment to empowerment and clear distinction of roles.
4. Regularly and rigorously monitor the General Manager’s performance in the areas of Ends and Executive Limitations.
5. Regularly and rigorously evaluate our Board performance in comparison to our agreements as written in Board Process and Board-Management Relationship policies.
6. Perpetuate the Board’s leadership capacity using robust recruitment, qualification, and nomination process; thoughtful appointments; fair elections; and ongoing education and training.
 - a. We will have a strategic year-round recruitment and screening process.
 - b. We will commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - c. We will provide excellent orientations to potential candidates and newly elected/appointed directors.
7. Perform other duties as required by the bylaws or because of limitations on General Manager authority.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in March.

Policy Type: Board Process
Policy Title: C3 – Agenda Planning
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

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

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

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in May.

Policy Type: Board Process
Policy Title: C4 – Board Meetings
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The Board will use Board meetings as a valuable and primary tool for getting the Board's job done.

1. The Board will use 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 owners except when a closed session is officially called.
 - a. The Board will use a closed session to deal with confidential matters, as long as the purpose of the session is stated in the meeting agenda. When possible, an announcement of the closed session should be included in the published agenda.
3. The Board will seek agreement through discussion. We will then finalize and document decisions with motions, seconds, and majority votes.
4. If the Board must make a decision outside of a regular meeting, we will follow our bylaws, include everyone, and ensure that it is properly documented.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in June.

Policy Type: Board Process
Policy Title: C5 – Directors’ Code of Conduct
Last Revised: December 18, 2023

The Board will commit ourselves to ethical, responsible, and lawful conduct.

1. Every director is responsible at all times for acting in good faith, in a manner which they reasonably believe to be in the best care and interest 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. This accountability supersedes any conflicting loyalty such as that to advocacy or interest groups, membership on other Boards or staff, and the personal interest of any director acting as an individual consumer or owner.
 - a. 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.
 - b. Every year, every director will complete the Conflict-of-Interest form and will verbally report at each board meeting actual and potential conflicts. Every director will immediately report any subsequent actual or potential conflicts to the whole board.
 - c. When the Board is to decide on an issue about which a director has an unavoidable conflict of interest, that director must abstain from the conversation and the vote.
 - d. A director who applies for employment at the Cooperative must first resign from the Board upon employment.
 - e. Any director who is also a paid employee has the same duties and responsibilities as any other director and has the additional duty of clearly segregating staff and Board responsibilities. Any director who is also a paid employee will resign from the Board if and when their employment ends.
3. Directors may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the organization.
 - a. When interacting with the General Manager or employees, directors must carefully and openly recognize their lack of authority.
 - b. When interacting with the public, the press, or other entities, or on social media, 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 not exhibit violent, oppressive, or racist behaviors or speech.

5. Directors will respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature and must continue to honor confidentiality after leaving Board service.
6. Directors will use electronic communications in a manner consistent with this policy and the responsibilities of a board member.
7. Directors will prepare for, attend, and participate in all Board meetings, retreats, and trainings.
8. 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.
9. Any director who does not follow the code of conduct policy can be removed from the Board by a 2/3 majority vote of the remaining Board.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in December.

Policy: Board Process
Policy Title: C6 – Officers’ Roles
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The Board will elect officers to help us accomplish our job.

1. No officer has any individual authority to supervise or direct the General Manager.
2. Officers may delegate their authority but remain accountable for its use.
3. The board president ensures the Board functions well and in accord with our policy agreements.
 - a. The president is authorized to make decisions that are consistent with Board Process and Board-Management Relationship policies in order to facilitate the Board’s functioning.
 - b. The president will chair and set the agenda for Board meetings.
 - c. The president is the point person between the Board and General Manager in between meetings.
 - d. The president plans for leadership (officer) perpetuation.
 - e. The president may represent the Board to outside parties.
4. The vice-president will perform the duties of the president if the president is unable to do so.
5. The treasurer is responsible for supporting the Board in all finance-related board work.
 - a. The treasurer will lead the Board’s process for creating and monitoring the Board’s (not the Cooperative’s) budget.
 - b. The treasurer will facilitate the Board’s understanding of the financial condition of the Cooperative.
6. The secretary will make sure the Board’s documents are accurate, up to date, and appropriately maintained.
 - a. Board documents include the policy register, meeting minutes, monitoring report summary, annual calendar, and committee charters.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in September.

Policy Type: Board Process
Policy Title: C7 – Board Committee Principles
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

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

1. Committees will reinforce and support Board holism.
 - a. Specifically, committees can help the whole Board move forward when they research alternatives and bring back options and information.
2. Board committees may not speak or act for the Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes.
3. Only the Board has the authority to appoint committee members.
4. The Board will establish, regularly review, and control committee responsibilities in written committee charters.
 - a. Charters must be approved by the Board.
 - b. We will carefully state committee expectations and authority to make sure they do not conflict with authority delegated to the General Manager.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in November.

Policy Type: Board Process
Policy Title: C8 – Governance Investment
Last Revised: November 25, 2024

The Board will invest in governance skills, methods, and support to allow us to govern with excellence.

1. The Board will use the Cooperative's resources prudently and strategically:
 - a. We will use training and retraining liberally to orient new directors and board candidates, 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.
 - e. In establishing Board compensation, we will:
 - i. Consider equity in discussions about compensation.
 - ii. Compensate each director \$200 per month and the board president \$300 per month, not contingent upon attending regular meetings, payable quarterly by March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31.
 - iii. Consider equity in discussions about compensation.
2. The Board will develop and approve an annual budget for the Board in a timely way as to not interfere with the development of the Cooperative's annual budget. We will complete this work no later than April.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in July.

Policy Type:	Board-Management Relationship
Policy Title:	D – Global Board-Management Connection
Last Revised:	September 26, 2022

The Board has hired the General Manager (GM) to operate the business. We will be an excellent employer to the GM as our sole employee, cultivating a relationship rooted in equity, respect, and mutual support. In delegating authority to the GM, we acknowledge the GM's expertise, and we will work collaboratively and transparently with the GM in addressing any issues as they arise.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in January.

Policy Type: Board-Management Relationship
Policy Title: D1 – Unity of Control
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

Only official decisions and policies of the Board are binding on the General Manager.

1. Decisions or instructions of individual directors, officers, or committees are not binding on the General Manager 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 General Manager can refuse any requests that, in the General Manager's opinion, may disrupt operations or that require too much staff time or resources.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in January.

Policy Type: Board-Management Relationship
Policy Title: D2 – Accountability to the General Manager
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The General Manager is accountable for achieving the Ends and operating the organization within the Executive Limitations.

1. The Board will view organizational accomplishment of Ends and organizational operation within Executive Limitations as successful General Manager performance.
2. The Board will not instruct or evaluate any employee other than the General Manager.

This policy will be reviewed annually by an internal report in January.

Policy Type:	Board-Management Relationship
Policy Title:	D3 – Delegation to the General Manager
Last Revised:	September 26, 2022

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

1. As long as the General Manager uses any reasonable interpretation of the Board's Ends and Executive Limitations policies, the General Manager is authorized to establish all further policies, practices, and plans for the cooperative.
2. The Board will respect and accept the General Manager'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.

This policy will be reviewed annually by an internal report in January.

Policy Type: Board-Management Relationship
Policy Title: D4 – Evaluating the General Manager
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The Board will systematically and rigorously monitor and evaluate the General Manager's job performance compared to expectations set forth in Board policies.

1. The Board's policy monitoring process is the foundation of our annual evaluation of the General Manager (GM).
 - a. In March of each year the Board will review a summary of the monitoring reports received during the previous 12 months.
 - b. The Board will invite the GM into a conversation to share other relevant information and clarifications.
 - c. Based on the review of reports and the conversation, the Board will present an evaluation letter to the GM. That letter will constitute our full evaluation, and it will be delivered no later than May 31.
2. The Board will acquire monitoring information by one or more of three methods:
 - a. Internal report in which the GM discloses policy interpretations and compliance information to the Board;
 - b. External report, in which an external, disinterested third party selected by the Board assesses compliance with Board policies; or
 - c. Direct Board inspection, in which a designated director or committee assesses compliance with the policy.
3. The Board will accept that the General Manager (GM) is compliant with a policy if the monitoring report includes a reasonable interpretation, including clear metrics and benchmarks, and adequate data that demonstrate accomplishment of that Whole Foods Co-op - Policy Register interpretation.
 - a. The Board's standard for compliance with a policy will be any reasonable interpretation by the GM. The GM's interpretation does not need to be an interpretation that is favored by individual directors or by the Board as a whole.
4. In evaluating non-compliance, we will consider the severity, implications, and trends, as well as the General Manager's explanation and plan to achieve compliance.
5. The Board will monitor all policies that instruct the General Manager. We can monitor any policy at any time by any method listed above but will ordinarily follow the schedule outlined in the Board Annual Calendar.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in January.

Policy Type: Board-Management Relationship
Policy Title: D5 – Compensating the General Manager
Last Revised: September 26, 2022

The Board will compensate the General Manager in a way that honors their value to the cooperative and demonstrates our commitment to equitable treatment.

1. The Board will establish a compensation package that is equitable, competitive in our market, and sustainable for the cooperative.
2. The Board will use a strategic process to establish the value of the General Manager's compensation, and we will complete this process in a timely manner.

This policy will be monitored annually by an internal report in January.