

workers.coop handbook

This document is a reference guide for how workers.coop Limited organises itself. This document like this organisation is a democratic work in progress. If you spot something that can be improve let us know.

Quick links

- www.workers.coop – website
- office.workers.coop – All our files stored (Nextcloud)
- forum.workers.coop – Discussion forum
- [Strategy presentation](#) – Our strategy
- [Guide to working groups](#) – How to start and run working groups
- [Glossary](#) – Terms and how we define them

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Vision & Purpose

(taken from our [incorporation document](#))

The purpose of the Cooperative is to carry out its function as a cooperative and to abide by the Cooperative Values and Principles, as defined and modified by the International Cooperative Alliance from time to time, in order to build a world where:

- a) everyone has access to rewarding, meaningful and sustainable work;
- b) the worker-controlled enterprise system is well known, easy to grasp, and a viable option for workers;
- c) capital serves labour, rather than dominating or exploiting labour;
- d) people retain the fruits of their work, and wealth is distributed equitably and fairly;
- e) working relationships are characterised by true equality and mutual accountability;
- f) people are able to collectively take control of their work, creating opportunities for skills and personal development, and for a better life balance; and
- g) the production of goods and services is integrated with democratic community development, and respects ecological limits.

OBJECTS

The objects of the Cooperative shall be to carry on business as a cooperative and to carry on any other trade, business or service and in particular but without limitation to:

- a) act as a sectoral federation to unite, defend and advance the shared interest of worker cooperatives and other worker-led or worker-owned enterprises;
- b) be the recognised voice and network for worker cooperation in the UK;
- c) provide access to specialist development advice, cooperative support and other shared services for worker cooperatives;
- d) strengthen worker cooperative culture by mobilising cooperators and supporters of the worker cooperative system through industrial networks, knowledge sharing and social movement alliances;
- e) participate in international workers' and cooperative networks, and actively promote worker internationalism; and
- f) Make the system of worker control and collective ownership accessible and relevant to new groups and generations of workers, refining our offer and organising models in the process.

The new federation's vision and identity will be set by members, but we expect it to embrace the basic ideas set out in the [CICOPA Declaration on Worker Co-operatives](#), and endorsed by the [ICA](#)

Principles

Building on the ICA and CICOPA declarations, we expect our members to shape and agree the guiding principles and practical governance of the organisation. This will inform our strategic priorities, structure, and decision making process. The following points offer a sense of what these might include, and suggest the sort of organisation we could become:

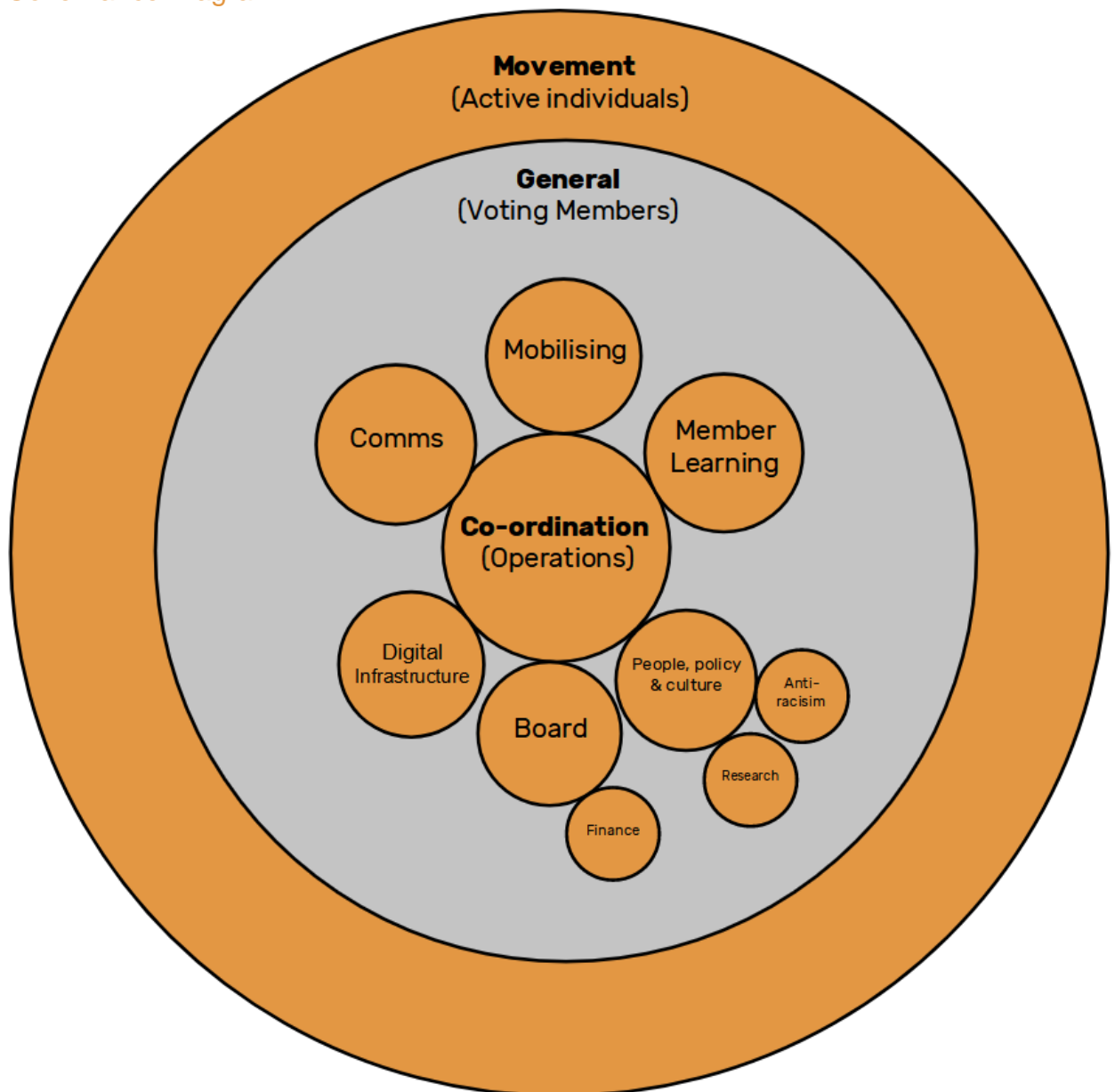
- **Movement building**
Organising methods are at the heart of everything we do. Wherever possible we use or build the assets of worker co-ops and cooperators in our network. Using their skills and capabilities; developing new capabilities - and worker co-ops - where they don't; working with partners and allies where we need to rely on external resources.
- **Inclusive**
Proactively seek out, involve, and learn from diverse groups in society. Create a genuinely egalitarian culture and space for people to reach their potential and flourish.
- **Lean and decentralised**
Keep overheads and bureaucracy to a minimum. The services we provide need to be self-organising, scalable and financially sustainable. Decision-making to be both highly delegated and accountable. Day-to-day activity to be designed as far as possible by those who carry out the work.
- **Fair and equitable**
An expectation that everyone contributes, but everyone should also benefit, at least in proportion to their contribution.
- **Reward and recognition**
A culture of celebrating and rewarding those who make a positive impact for our movement, being mindful not to focus on those who shout the loudest or have the most free time.
- **'Good enough for now, safe enough to try'**
A bias towards action over deliberation. Getting full buy-in from all members is desirable, but not at the expense of moving forward, even if that means taking calculated, properly-understood risks.
- **Making alliances and partnerships**
Orienting towards, and working with, other organisations groups and currents that share our goal of social emancipation through democratic ownership and control of economic activity.

Governance

We are now [incorporated as a Co-operatives Society with the FCA](#). The rules are available [here](#).

- There are two voting membership categories:
 - Co-operative Enterprises (Worker Co-ops)
 - Worker members (individuals)
- We have clauses for not-for-profit, common ownership and one-member-one-vote.
- There is a Board of Directors, currently made up of the Worker Co-operative Council but this will transition to an elected Board by worker coop members (see below, Board)
- Our general approach to governance (and decision making) is to be inspired by [Sociocracy](#) as an organising tool, based around consent (not consensus) organized through Groups (sometimes called circles) for our operational and day to day decision making.

Governance Diagram



Movement Group - Every individual who is part of a worker co-op member, worker member or supporter. The largest Group and able to take part in other Groups whether formally part of the governance structure, or created as member interest groups or [peer networks](#) through our forum.

General Group (AGM) – A Group of all “voting members” able to vote on the big decisions, set high level strategy, policy, funding etc and once a year operates as the AGM.

Co-ordination Group – A place for all the other groups to share information and co-ordinate so we know what each individual group is doing.

Board – Six Directors democratically elected by the General Group against a role profile. These roles to be on three year terms with two Directors standing for election each year. One Director appointed from the worker member class as an Executive Director. The Board can also co-opt one more place to fill a skills gap. This group will act as the Directors, but with the specific function to focus on overall strategy/direction.

Working Groups - These Groups are agreed by the Coordination Group, and resourced from the General group. The primary focus is to feed into or deliver specific activities of the federation. [see active groups](#)

Member interest groups/Peer Networks - These groups are more informal to help organise and support people with similar interests or roles. The goal is to help members connect, learn and co-ordinate with each other. Most will be self-organising but supported through the infrastructure of the federation.

Groups

Using [Sociocracy](#) for inspiration we are delivering work through self-organising teams called groups. Each group will have a defined **purpose, domain** (what a group has authority over) and membership with defined **roles**. [Guidance on how to start and run groups can be found here](#). Below are a list of active groups.

Board

Notes and Actions

Purpose: To oversee the strategic direction of workers.coop until a fully incorporated organization, with agreed governance structure and democratically elected representatives are in place to take over this function

Domain:

- Overall strategic direction
- Project finances, budgets and sign-off of expenditure
- Communication and liaison with Co-operatives UK
- Ultimate decision making body

Members:

Used to be Co-operatives UK's Worker Co-op Council

Cath Muller (Footprint workers co-ops), Ross Hodgson (Suma), Stephen Gill (VME), Debbie Clarke (Unicorn Grocery), Sion Whellens (Calverts), Leigh Galletly (Green City), Jonny Gordon-Farleigh (Stir to Action), John Atherton (Exec Director)

Point of Contact: John Atherton

Coordination Group

[Notes and Actions](#)

Purpose: To act as a central point of coordination for the day-to-day activities of the working groups of the Federation.

Domains:

- Maintaining information flow to proactively ensure that groups have the information that they need to enable them to self-manage effectively
- Maintain a good oversight of the overall day-to-day function of the groups within the federation
- Identifying gaps and overlaps between working group domains
- Deciding who decides for anything that falls between group domains and/or where we have conflict over whose domain it is in
- Supporting and advising groups through any decision-making issues where they're struggling to make progress (this can often relate to domain clarity)

- Acting as a central forum for feedback to proactively identify and respond to issues and support needs
- Supporting working groups to deliver in line with the strategic plans set by the Board

Members:

Kiri, Sion, Ross, Matt, John, Liam

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Point of Contact: John Atherton

Digital Infrastructure Group

[Notes and Actions](#)

Purpose: To design, build and maintain the digital infrastructure needed to operate a lean, decentralised, mass membership organisation.

Domain:

- Web and email server hosting and maintenance
- Nextcloud hosting and SSO
- CiviCRM hosting, and development
- Oversight of all digital infrastructure development and decision making

Members:

Chris (Webarch), Liam (Media Blaze), Graham Mitchell (GM3). Dan (Unicorn)

Point of Contact: Chris Croome

Communications Group

[Notes and actions](#)

[Style Guide](#)

Purpose: To shape and deliver both strategic and operational communications on behalf of [workers.coop](#). To ensure we have a compelling and consistent narrative and brand. To promote both our new federation but also play a leading role in how we talk about worker co-operation and any future campaigns

Domain:

- Brand, name, style guide and imagery.
- Key messages and copy writing for website and other core comms
- Support for and oversight of all communications channels, including mass emails and social media

Members:

Sion (Calverts), Louise (Media Coop), Debbie (Unicorn), Sarah Tucker (Media Coop), Ben and Row (Creative Co-op), John Atherton,

Point of Contact: Sion Whellens

Member Learning group

[Notes and actions](#)

Purpose: To educate people to start, strengthen and grow great worker co-ops.

Domains:

- Design and oversee a range of learning opportunities for workers and supporters within our membership, increasing their skill and capabilities to meet the needs of their co-ops.
- Support the mobilisation group with the creation of induction resources to on-board new members and supporters of workers.coop
- Design and oversee our “Co-op clinic” or other services to connect members with problems to solutions or supporters who can help.
- Make starting or converting to a worker co-op, well known, easy to grasp, and a viable option.

Members:

John Atherton, Douglas Racionzer, Cilla Ross, Mark Simmonds, Nathan Brown, John Bevan, Doug Belshaw, Caleb Elliott, Kate Whittle.

Mobilising Group

[Notes and Actions](#)

Calendar link: <https://office.workers.coop/remote.php/dav/calendars/cath/mobilising-group/>

Purpose: To lead on the mobilisation of our [workers.coop](#) members and other supporters so that we have a motivated, capable and coordinated group of people able to deliver the work of the federation. This is to support both the internal running of the organisation and also galvanising a mass of people to carry out campaigning actions, or participate in our peer learning and events programmes.

Domains:

- Design, implement and oversee the infrastructure, systems and processes needed to recruit, onboard and organise people to carry out the actions within the federation strategy.
- Create defined roles and actions people can carry out on behalf of the federation and then run campaigns to recruit and engage members and supporters to take part.
- Create and run reward and recognition activities to celebrate successes and motivate people to act.

Members:

Cath (Footprint), Louise (Media Coop), Caleb (Principle Six), Matt (York Collective), Michael (Unicorn), John Atherton, Consulted: Alex bird,

Point of Contact: Cath Muller

People, Policy and Culture Group

[Notes and Actions](#)

Purpose: To oversee the internal systems, policies and processes within the federation, and to support the cultivation of a healthy, co-operative culture.

Domain:

- Oversee and regularly review the policies of the federation, which remain the final responsibility of the Board .
- Oversee the functioning, implementation and evolution of the internal governance of the federation.
- Developing systems and processes to support a healthy, people-centered, co-operative culture within the federation
- Developing systems and processes to support diversity, inclusion, equity, power sharing and justice within the federation

Members:

Driving: Kiri Langmead (People Support Co-op), Abbie Kempson (People Support Co-op), Mark Simmonds (Co-op Culture), Leigh (Greencity), Aaron, John Atherton

Point of Contact: Kiri Langmead

Marketing and Branding

Style Guide

Name: workers.coop Limited

Write: workers.coop

Pronounced: workers dot co-op

Alternative names:

The Federation

Federation of Worker Coops

Tag lines (for now):

Liberating our work

Motivate, educate, organise

Archive stuff

[Not sure how good the version history so putting some info here rather than deleting]

- [Flipchart images](#) - from worker co-op weekend for Group
- [Background presentation](#) – from worker co-op weekend, for context

Working groups closed

Business Planning Group

[Notes and actions](#)

[Business Model Canvas and Flow](#)

[Draft Business Plan](#)

[Finances](#)

Members:

Driving: John Atherton,

Involved: Dug (HCDT), Matt (York Collective) Nathan (Culture.coop), Mark (Culture.coop).

Consulted: Ross (Suma), Emma (Open Data), Louise (Media coop), Owen, Jack (Open Data Services).

Purpose: To create an engaging and financially sustainable business plan attractive to members and key funders, to deliver the vision and strategy, specifically for the first two years.

Domain:

- Overall business model and development of plan
- Membership proposition development
- Subscription model and pricing
- Financial modelling and initial budgets