

*This article is a summary of the information on Ends policies from the written materials that Michael Healy has provided to the FCC Board. The original plan was to add more examples of Ends policies from other Coops and then submit this to the New Beet (which could still happen). This is an unfinished draft, and not intended for distribution beyond the Board. – Helen*

## **What is an Ends Policy, and why should you care?**

*In the coming months the Board will be inviting you to join us in the process of defining and refining the Ends policy for our Coop. There will be multiple opportunities and venues in which you can participate, including member forums, the Annual Meeting, and meetings with the Board of Directors. The purpose of this article is to explain the nature and purpose of an Ends policy, so that you, the members, can more effectively engage in this discussion.*

In Policy Governance jargon, the “Ends” policy is essentially the Board’s statement of the Coop’s mission. Its fundamental purpose is to provide direction to the General Management Team as to what they should strive to achieve. The Ends policy is also used as the basis for the Board’s annual evaluation of the General Management Team.

Because it defines the nature and direction of the organization, the Ends policy is the most important of all of the Board’s policies. Thus, it is essential that it be crafted with the participation and input of members, so that it reflects the general consensus of the ownership.

### **Features of a Strong Ends Policy**

“It is the larger context that gives meaning to the organization’s mission and makes the organization’s very existence possible.”

A strong Ends policy has a scope appropriate to the organization. It should describe broad goals rather than detailed operational objectives, which are more accurately seen as the means by which to reach the Ends. Such details are better left to the Management Team, both because there are too many of them to list comprehensively, and because attempting to do so would lead the Board down the road to micromanagement. Instead, the Ends policy should state the Coop’s overarching goals as clearly as possible, entrusting the development of objectives (means) to the Management Team. “Means are best determined by the people who must use them.”

On the other hand, an Ends policy that is too broad and idealistic will fail to fulfill its purpose of providing practical guidance to the Management Team. For example, “sustainability,” although a laudable goal, is too broad to provide the Management Team with useful direction. Thus, although an Ends policy is necessarily informed by our collective vision for the future, it must be focused on specific, concrete goals.

An Ends policy can potentially describe three dimensions of the organization’s goals. First, every Ends policy should list the results that the Management Team should try to achieve.

The focus is on outcomes, not on the tools or activities employed to achieve those outcomes. It is not necessary (or desirable) to list all of the possible positive effects of the organization's mission. Instead, the Ends policy should focus on the results that form the purpose of the organization, the achievement of which constitutes organizational success.

Secondly, the Ends policy may describe the intended recipients of the desired results. This may include discrete groups, such as Coop employees or member owners, and/or broader populations, such as residents of Franklin County, or households with earned incomes within a specified range, or health-conscious consumers.

Finally, the Ends policy may indicate the value, cost or priority assigned to each result. This may include the relative priority of various results and/or recipients, the dollar amount or percent of resources to be devoted to each result or group of recipients, the maximum acceptable cost, the minimum number of staff to be assigned to a particular desired outcome, the time frame within which results are to be achieved, etc.

The language of Ends policies should focus on ends rather than means for achieving the ends, effect rather than effort, and results rather than actions. It should be brief and succinct, not overly descriptive, and favor accuracy and clarity over aesthetics. Because the Ends policy is a practical document that will be implemented, it must be realistic. Resist the temptation to glorify intentions to make them sound inspirational or impressive. Keep in mind that the General Management Team will be evaluated for their success in achieving the Ends, so the goals described therein need to be concrete enough to be effectively monitored.

Following is our Coop's current Ends policy, as well as Ends policies from a few other coops. None of them are presented here as representatives of an ideal Ends policy; they are merely examples of the efforts of our own and others' Coops.

#### Franklin Community Cooperative, Greenfield and Shelburne Falls, MA

1. A healthy and vibrant local community
2. A sustainable local food system
3. Downtown food store(s)
4. Enhanced community dialogue
5. Healthy people
6. Business development beyond food

#### Brattleboro Food Coop

1. Reasonably priced food and products with an emphasis on healthy, locally grown, organic, and fairly traded goods.
2. A welcoming community marketplace.
3. A regenerative business that has a net positive environmental impact.

4. A strong local economy.
5. Relevant information about food and related products, the environment, and the Cooperative Values and Principles.
6. Reasonable access to participation in the cooperative.

#### Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society, Hanover, NH

The Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society exists to provide cooperative commerce for the greater good of our members and community.

1. The Upper Valley will have a retail source of food that is affordable, healthy, grown and/or processed locally to the fullest extent possible.
2. There will be economic value returned to the community via charitable contributions, outreach projects, patronage refunds to member and other avenues.
3. Customers will be better educated about food issues and, as a results, make healthier choices than those who shop elsewhere.
4. There will be vibrant cooperative sector in the economy, both nationally and regionally, and a local community educated in the value of cooperative principles and enterprises.
5. The cooperative's bioregion will have a vibrant local agricultural community and that community will, in turn, have a reliable retail market for its products.
6. There will be a major source of employment in the community that provides personal satisfaction to employees, livable wages and financial security for employees and their families.
7. There will be a thriving business organization that protects and restores the environment.

We discern seven distinct groups comprising "our members and community," as follows:

1. Co-op members
2. Non-member customers
3. Co-op staff and their families
4. Local suppliers
5. Local community
6. Larger cooperative community
7. Past and future generations of Hanover Co-op members