

Mission Statement Survey Report

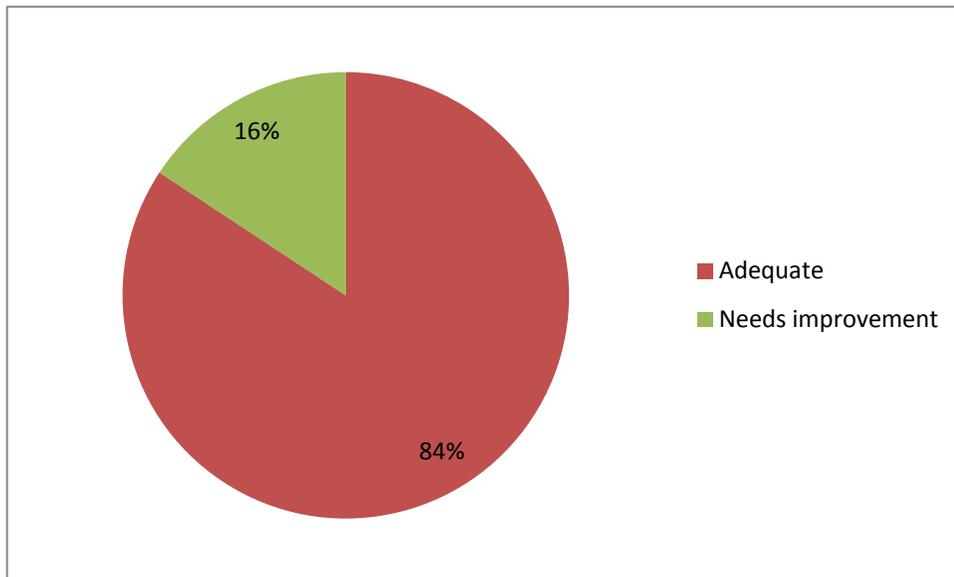
"The Board wishes to thank the over 200 Co-op member-owners who recently took the time and effort to respond to a Board survey requesting owner input on potential changes to the Co-op's mission statement. Over the next few months, the Board will consider whether to make any changes to the current mission statement, which has not been changed since 2002. The survey results will help inform the Board's deliberations. While the Board believes that the time is ripe to review our mission statement, we have no preconceived notions whether changes should be made, and if so, what any such improvements should be.

The survey results may be summarized as follows:

84% of the owners responding stated the current mission statement is adequate, while 16% thought improvement is needed; 14% thought that needed improvements are substantive. A variety of specific, thoughtful, comments were also received, with themes that included: the Co-op needs to do more to meet its mission of providing products at reasonable prices; support of local farmers should be emphasized; support of staff is important; support of sustainability and environmental values is also important; and some owners prefer a shorter, more succinct mission statement."

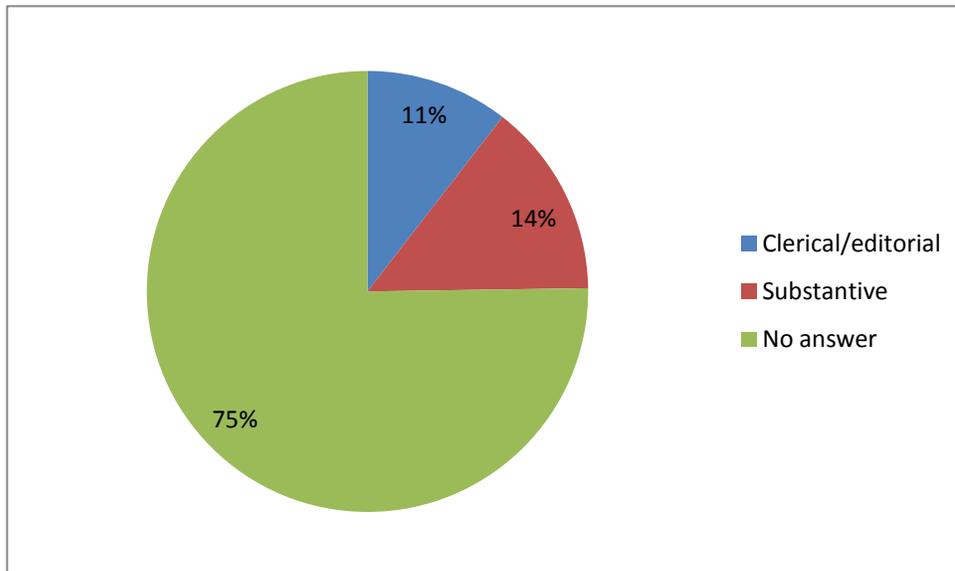
General Perception of Mission Statement

Adequate	177
Needs improvement	33



What kind of improvements needed?

Clerical/editorial	22
Substantive	30
No answer	158



3. Please specify any changes you think are needed. For example: Are there portions of the existing Mission Statement that should be deleted? Or substantially reworked? Are there additional topics that should be addressed? Please include any suggested language changes.

Answers

The Coop believes in fostering member involvement and responding to member needs. As a vegan, I am pleased to see the Coop adding more options that I am unable to find in local groceries - I just wanted to use this space to say thank you!!

Perhaps add something about educating the general public via hand-outs, etc...as to what constitutes great health and how to try to achieve this.

The term "natural" has been co-opted by cartels as a way of masking an awful array of chemicals. Special care is needed here in purchasing items for sale at the store. An example is Cliff bars. Keep up the good work! It is much appreciated.

Hello, I have some specific thoughts about how Mission Statements should be crafted so here is a quick idea of how you might consider changing the style... For what it's worth, here is my take:
We will provide our community with high quality natural and organic foods while sourcing these environmentally sound products through socially responsible producers and suppliers, including purchasing local and regional products where possible.
We will maintain a personable and friendly shopping experience, providing service that is cheerful, courteous, and knowledgeable, always understanding our obligation to listen to our members as we conduct our affairs and make decisions accordingly.
We will be a resource to our membership by providing useful information on health and nutrition and political/economic issues related to food, and by promoting awareness of the value of consumer control through the cooperative system.

I'd add something about transparency and more about member-owner engagement. It's notable to me how much better the co-op is meeting its mission since (names redacted) left. The improvements are tremendous!

The part about reasonable prices is questionable. I know a number of people who do not shop at the Co-op or have started buying more of their groceries and other items elsewhere b/c of the higher prices at the Co-op. So I wonder if your first bullet item should either amend or omit the last part about "...at reasonable prices."

I think it says what it needs to say...

being more specific about local and regional all producers, perhaps a target % of products.
providing resources and support, education resources for producers.
community outreach to schools and other children oriented services to educate our youth.

Love the store!

Looks ok to me

Should include your charitable contributions policy. Should include an ongoing feedback source from members.

I do not have any suggestions for changing the mission statement.

I shop the co-op frequently for produce, fruits and nuts. The items are always fresh, but I find the prices are very high. The store is much more friendly under new management. Keep up the good work.

Use of the term "natural". What does it mean? How does it apply to the Co op as far as what products are stocked and information provided to consumers? It is a misleading marketing term often used to provide a "health halo" for foods that are anything but.

I also hear people say I bought this at the health foods store so it must be healthy. They are referring to foods purchased at the coop that are really not healthy at all, but merely low nutrient dense foods that can be called junk foods made from "all natural ingredients".

<p>I think it's specific enough to be a guide, yet broad enough so as not to be too picky or restrictive on practical actions deemed important by management.</p> <p>One little grammatical error, if the Mission Statement stays as-is: Original: "Support environmentally and socially responsible producers and suppliers, including purchasing local and regional products where available within our price and quality standards." The phrase "where available" should read "when available." :-)</p>
<p>-- I live in Hampstead, NH so I am a distance from you.-- I shop at Trader Joe's often.-- I think they are a good model to follow.-- Their prices are reasonable and they have products free of chemical preservatives. - I like your products but the prices are high.-- I am very low income and I have to be extremely careful with my money.-- I do shop at the Concord COOP when I am up that way but I think your prices are high.- I always default to a local business when I can.-- I believe in supporting local businesses.--</p>
<p>I guess I'd like to see supporting local farms/vendors more prominent.</p>
<p>I suggest reworking the provisions related to "reasonable prices" as well as further defining "consumer cooperative and financially sound principles"</p>
<p>I am a breast cancer survivor and have taken the Anticancer Lifestyle Program offered through Payson Cancer Center. The course information on diet/nutrition and environmental toxins was an eye-opener. Given the statistical upsurge of cancer diagnoses and the (happily) increase in survival rates, it might make sense to include some language that identifies the Co-op as being a "go-to" resource for current and recovering cancer patients who want to eat healthy food and get rid of toxins in their home/office, etc. Your mostly organic product line and environmentally-friendly cleaning and personal care products offer an attractive alternative. Perhaps it's time for the Co-op to let the world know that it stands ready to help cancer survivors move into a healthier way of living. The Co-op has been a lifeline for me and I would love to have other cancer survivors know about the excellent work that you do. My gratitude is without bounds.</p>
<p>I think the intent is there and good....the follow through fails at times. 1. at reasonable prices...I'D LOVE TO SEE THAT! I will say that there has been a noticable improvement in the overall morale of the store.</p>
<p>It is the day-to-day experience that determines success. A mission statement should neither encapsulate the entire charter of the organization nor be the latest fashionable slogan. I'm opposed to any change as a waste of time, but if you decide to, see if you can make the "statement" just that -- a statement -- and not a muddled political, economic and ecological manifesto composed of a paragraph and six bullet points. "Provide our members with a pleasant shopping experience while offering a variety of healthy and responsibly-produced products." The rest are adverbs that just clutter and confuse.</p>
<p>I don't think advocacy is necessary.</p>

I agree with all the points of the mission statement. Perhaps we could add "local" in with the "organic and natural" in point 1 since this has become a significant focus of the store and movement. If you wanted to shorten the mission statement to just a sentence or two, though, that would make sense, then keep the current mission statement as a broader vision statement. But, I do think the current mission is pretty good as it is.

You might add something about how the co-op supports its employees and its mission regarding staff. Thank you.

The fist bullet, ending in "...at reasonable prices," seems incorrect. Frankly, the prices are high. I attempt to make myself okay with that by assuming that the employees are paid a living wage and/or that "profit" is funneled back into educational outreach regarding healthy foods, nutrition, and local agricultural endeavors. Somehow, the wording should be refined in this regard. Thank you for your efforts and consideration.

The mission statement seems reasonable to me. However, I believe that for many years the coop has not fulfilled the first goal of its mission:
"Provide our community with high quality natural and organic foods and environmentally sound products at reasonable prices".
I am a middle-income person and rarely shop at the coop because prices are too high.
Coops in the U.S. were first started in order to make healthy food available to people of all incomes. I would like to see the coop return to these roots.

The co-op is run too much like a for profit store. It needs to focus on it's members and not the community at large. Members should have an incentive to work at the co-op or a farm that grows food distributed at the co-op.

The Co-op's mission statement does an excellent job articulating the purpose and values of our organization. But it would be wonderful to put together a concise phrase or two that captures the reason we exist. What is now our mission statement could become a statement of our values. Changes to the mission statement go to the heart of the Coop and the process to change the mission statement should involve the membership at a much more comprehensive level than this survey. I would also love to see the Coop develop a vision statement - something that will guide our store into the future.
A possibility: We support the health and well-being of our community by providing wholesome, affordable foods and products through a locally-oriented and collectively owned business.

I think that the COOP isn't meeting it's mission of reasonable prices on many items. I buy supplements at 2 other local providers as their price is SUBSTANTIALLY lower.
I realize this isn't the feedback you are seeking, but it's my opportunity to make this statement .
Thanks

I think more products from companies that stand strong about who they are and feel strongly about having a labeling law for GMO's Ex. We don't buy anything from organic companies just because they sell organic products and don't stand behind a GMO labeling law. And the Co-op sell a lot of those so called organic products from those bad companies that could care less about our health and the environment.

Due to the recent fiasco involving the GM and Assistant manager being fired, perhaps an addition to the mission statement should include something like this:
Provide a friendly work environment in which all employees are treated respectfully, fairly and paid a decent living wage/benefits.

The Co-op's apparent mission is to be a high end gourmet store that is unaffordable to most members, so perhaps the mission statement should include that.

If anything gets added you might consider also the Coop's role in the community. That it will actively support and participate in making downtown Concord a more vibrant, healthy and sustainable district.

The cost of food is an important issue that hasn't been sufficiently addressed by the Concord Food Co-op's mission statement, or the organization's management. I have determined that the Co-op is more expensive than other local stores for many items that I commonly purchase. It has a reputation in my community (Canterbury) for being a high-end store for yuppies - not the original intention I'm sure. My wife and I have belonged to co-ops for 45 years, in Berkeley, Seattle, and Santa Monica. This store feels more like a small Whole Foods than the "old time" co-ops that I remember.

I expressed these concerns with the former store manager and she poo-pooed them. I like being able to find good organic food and unusual food items that aren't available elsewhere, but I don't like paying extra, so I keep track of prices and shop selectively.

Providing a Realistic livable wage to our dedicated knowledgeable staff. Members need to know that the individuals keeping the place running are being compensated correctly, for their very Particular Skills and Knowledge. I would shop somewhere more often if I knew the employees were happy and paid fairly. Want members and customers (which includes employees) to be healthy and happy? Pay them enough to buy these oh so reasonably priced groceries that you proudly boast about. The starting wage is supposed to be livable by conventional standards. Is that what the co-op stands for? Conventional standards? Are the co-op staff not worth more than the bottom line "livable" wage? I can not stress the quotation marks more than to dedicate this sentence to stressing it. Why would I want to contribute to an everyday healthy life style, if the person selling the product can not afford to live an everyday healthy life style?

You're more than just a space: you're a ****place.**** Think some about why that might be. Also, explore some more who your "community" is...

I think there should be a bit more focus on the way the organization model reflects the mission

The term "natural foods" is almost meaningless. In addition to prioritizing availability of organic foods, stress availability of foods that contain no GMO's, no trans fats, no artificial flavors, no high fructose corn syrups, etc. Add to mission statement a commitment to sustainability, within the practices of the Co-op, as well as within the practices of the producers and suppliers of the Co-op.

While I don't have a specific example, the mission statement should be a 1-2 sentence affirmative statement. The remainder of your bulleted items are your objectives - how you will fulfill your mission.

I would not waste the time between now and October dwelling on this when the mission statement seems adequate... There are more important things for the staff to do than dwell 4 months on changing this if majority feel the same way from your survey. Move on to more important things.

I think "reasonable prices" need to be amended as many of the same brands can be purchased cheaper at other local stores.

other stores offer the same organic foods at a lesser cost than the co-op does.
since management is in the process of change, the environment has improved..
product diversity is a moot point at this time as many if not all of the products can be purchased at a lower cost at other stores or on line
overall, the statement is adequate

I suggest saying more about your mission as an employer. The employees are vital to the success of the co-op. Taking good care of them is paramount. This should be reflected in the mission by more than just the last words of the statement, "act as a supportive and caring employer."

I suggest an entire bullet point dedicated to the mission as pertains to the employees.

Idea:

"We create an environment that values and supports employee engagement and promotes a team of dedicated employees who are committed to the success of the co-op."

As a member for more than 25 years, I believe the mission statement reflects the needs of members, the community, and employees. However, I don't believe the mission is often met, especially the "reasonable prices" portion. I hear complaints weekly from people, most of whom are members, that they can't afford to shop at the co-op. I'm in the store several times a week and see people putting items back on the shelf because a product is almost double Market Basket's regular price. Often they are people I do not know, so they are cautioning a stranger. Imagine what they are telling their friends and family!

The mission statement does not address the "members". Like what and why we have members and what our responsibility is to them? Are members just the same as non-members? They are not as we funded the huge recent store expansion in Concord on millions of our dollars.
Separate topic, pricing. Our prices are very high on some exact products I buy at Market Basket. For example Boves tomato sauce. Why do we charge 6.50 and I can get it for 4.00 across the street and down the hill? Just saying Not sure Wes are living up to the affordable pricing part of our mission statement.

A survey of the members should be done yearly.
I was in the store today, June 26 and was not happy to see how little inventory was on the selves especially in the produce area. This was Sunday for seniors to come in and shop. To me this was a violation of bullet no. 2 of your mission statement.

I haven't seen evidence of supporting local farmers. I see that the coop owns its own farm and this doesn't support local farmers.

Not reasonable pricing, needs to be scrutinized. With the local stores offering better pricing, Market Basket, Hannafords, and now a Whole Foods in Bedford. Meats and poultry, very often fruits and vegetables. Be realistic.

"act as a supporting and caring employer" does not say enough about the way a business should treat employees. I do not know what starting wage you offer employees, but I do know that the NH minimum wage is only 1/3 of what it costs to live in Concord, NH. Also, full time jobs with benefits are infinitely more valuable to workers than part-time jobs without. I would like to see some language that addresses the real needs of the workers.

I believe the Co-op's product mix should not be limited to organic and natural foods -- there are too many people in greater Concord who would benefit from being served by a cooperative grocery store. Co-ops like the one in Hanover show that this is do-able and desirable. I agree that the organic and natural foods should be front-and-center however.
It's not clear whether the mission statement is the same thing as the Co-op's "ends" policies for purposes of Policy Governance. If it is, the statement could be reworked so that it is more fully focused on ends rather than means.

I think it's perfect the way it reads. Thanks.

Be a resource... could be shortened or made into two statements instead of using two "and"s.
Good luck!

Prepared foods are now an integral part of the store, at least Concord.

The only thing I can think of is to provide nutritional information for people on restrictive diets but I don't know if there is enough space in the coop to add this service for customers.

I am most concerned about the co-op's environmental impact. The Celery Stick Cafe generates a lot of trash that cannot be recycled. I would like to see alternatives to the "tossed away" trash be explored. There are other areas in which we could do much better: the single cup coffee machine, the plastic bags at check out (I know someone believes these are environmentally sound) but whatever the argument they send the wrong message to the public at large. So, I would like to see something in the mission statement regarding our responsibilities as stewards of the environment and a greater efforts this area. The mission statement doe mention supporting "environmentally and socially responsible" providers, but I think we need stronger language about our own environmental responsibility. We can't have it all: throw away convenience and environmental responsibility. There are some alternatives.

(I don't have any suggested changes. I want to tell you all that the atmosphere at the Co-op has much improved since letting go of the former GM. There's a lovely lightheartedness about the place. Thank you for making that hard decision and for having the foresight to move the Co-op forward.)

"item one, add emphasis on local producers.
item 2 and 3 seem duplicative. item 6, add paying a liveable wage.
shorter would be better.
also, let's communicate our mission and the 7 core principles with prominent store signage and in written marketing materials more often."

Include some form of commitment to diversity.

To treat our customers w respect and integrity and likewise for management and employees to act w respect and integrity.

Would like to see the Co-op move toward eliminating all products that contain GMOs and finding environmentally responsible alternatives.

I think the Co-op's Mission statement is great the way it is. I believe the co-op is all the mission statement states it will be.
Thank you.

I think it needs a lofty/strong/inspiring introduction, then the current mission statement with its bullet points would work better. Right now there is nothing to "bring you in" to the mission.

How about adding something that reflects the health benefits of products from other cultures?

"Provide our community with high quality natural and organic foods and environmentally sound products at reasonable prices."

I think you should delete "at reasonable prices" because that is not true.

Compared to the products I find at the farmer's markets and at the some of the supermarket chains, some of your products were almost triple the cost, and most were double. Much as I hate not shopping local, my paycheck dictates my spending habits.

I like coming to the Co-op because of the sense of community bonding I find here. Unfortunately, my income is not substantial enough to shop at the Co-op on a more frequent basis.

I realize your overhead is outrageous, especially when you try to provide more fair trade and certified organic/non GMO products to us.

Providing lower priced products from local holistic providers and farms would definitely bring more folk like me into the Co-op.

Just a suggestion from a member-owner.

Add "be realistically competitive" to the mission statement.

In 2002, the Co-Op was the primary source of organic foods in Concord, and priced accordingly. Competition has since increased in the area, with many of the same (or similar) items offered at lower prices.

Example: Hannaford carries more brands of organic dairy products than you do. I don't care for Nancy's Cottage Cheese, but that's all I usually find at the CoOp. So when cottage cheese is on my shopping list, I go to Hannaford and, since they carry most or all of the organic and natural products that might be on my list, I do my weekly shopping while I'm there. (Note: the areas where your inventories are better, and worth a special trip, are (IMO) bulk items and imported cheeses. Those are real competitive advantages: promote them!)

I haven't been surveyed for what I'd like from the CoOp ... at least not in a long time. That'd be a good start.

I think the mission statement is excellent. I might switch bullet points two and three, but I don't see that as critical. I think number one is absolutely critical. I wish members would receive more information about what is driving prices in certain areas. I think bullet point five is very helpful, but I would not expend funds there that result in higher prices for products.

Thank you for asking for my input.

Provide our community with high quality natural and organic foods and environmentally sound products at reasonable prices.

I think "reasonable prices" is vague, and undefined. Who determines "reasonable"?

Is it reasonable in relation to sourcing costs? Reasonable in relation to other retailers? Reasonable given the generally rare nature in Concord?

We are an upper middle class family, and due to multiple food sensitivities and ethical standards, we choose to eat a very holistic diet. However, shopping exclusively at the Co-Op would be budget prohibitive, I feel like the cost makes the Co-Op a luxury and only available to financially privileged, which excludes most of the greater Concord area residents. I love the idea of the Co-Op, but financially, I drive to Whole Foods, because my dollar goes much farther.

My main issue with the Coop is that I believe there should be greater emphasis on locally sourced and less emphasis on organic - if it comes all the way from New Zealand, but is organic, is that really better for the earth? Is selling "arctic" pure water in individual plastic bottles AT ALL a practice we want to condone????? - transportation, plastic, we have excellent water right here....?? (Don't know if that is still available, but saw it once at the Coop.) So, in the mission statement, maybe the first bullet where it says "environmentally sound" needs to be expanded upon, or maybe just thought about and acted upon more fully. And where it says "natural and organic", realize that organic is not the only word there. Sometimes local farms are organic but not certified because of the paperwork and expense, but are still natural and local.

Thank you!

The fifth bullet maybe could be reworded.....not crazy about how it reads....had to read it a few times to feel I understood it.....

"Be a resource to our membership by providing information on health and nutrition, and social, political and economic issues related to food, and by promoting awareness of the value of consumer control through the cooperative system."

chg "Reasonable" prices to "affordable".

Add to Service--Knowledgeable "& dependable" or some such wording to indicate that staff turnover, including cashiers, is expected to be minimal.

Add to "financially sound principles-" economically competitive".Organic prices at Market Basket are better!

Please consider adding language about treating all customers with respect and courtesy. I ask because I am African-American and have shopped at the Co-op since it was on State Street; I've been a member for a number of years--yet I continue to be followed around the store when I'm there (among a few other annoying things).

I personally feel committed to the ideals of the Co-op, and of its belief that a healthy community includes healthy, whole food, supporting local farms and businesses, and education. I'm saddened when the attitude at the Co-op can feel unwelcoming and off-putting.

Please specify and define the Co-op owner/member status and benefits versus community or employee status.

What makes a co-op unique and distinct from regular grocery stores.

Provide a means for Co-op owner/member to communicate their inputs for feedback and concerns on an as needed basis either publicly or privately.

List the name/position/phone/email of all the employees for coordination for various issues.

List of upcoming board meetings and topics via email and who can attend.

State it's status a non-profit or other.

After reading and re-reading the mission statement, I cannot see anything I would change. I shop fairly regularly at the Co-op and am pleased with my experiences.

My only (minimal) input is that oftentimes there is no one available to help me when I cannot locate a product, etc.... people who are on the floor or near to it seem preoccupied and give the body language to not disturb them. Just my opinion.

Also, I collect stamps and have a difficult time finding the # of stamps for many of the items offered. Often not marked or hard to find. This is frustrating.

Your emphasis on local is minimal. With all the great local farms, we need to include stronger language about providing local food sources, even if it is more expensive than national organic brands. Let your customers choose within their ethics and budgets which they'd rather buy. I would rather eat meat from a local farm with humane, sustainable practices than from an "organic" national chain where the label may be close to meaningless. But still, I would choose organic over factory farmed anything.

I'll let you wordsmith the above.

The language for "a personable and friendly place to shop" and "service that is cheerful, courteous" is certainly adequate, but it is not reaching most of the checkout personnel. As a frequent shopper, I often see an aloof and unfriendly employee.

Welcome and reward customers with a distinct shopping experience that reflects our local community, cooperative values and serves these two goals: promote and source local food. Nurture win/win business relationships that build out a healthy, sustainable and resilient food chain with various

providers. Educate members and the broader community about the benefits and ways of eating healthy food.

With your recent personnel changes, I feel that you are better following the mission statement in regards to customer service, (I was often offended by one now-gone employee) and I hope/trust that employees are treated better now as know of some poor treatment/even fear among employees.