



September 2023

**Thank you for your interest in running for the
Belfast Community Co-op Board of Directors in 2024!**

BELFAST COMMUNITY CO-OP

Since 1976 the Co-op has been integral in Belfast and Waldo County: serving the community, expanding its outreach, responding to the shifting natural foods landscape, and highlighting local vendors and producers. The Belfast Community Co-op is the culmination of hard work and a deep sense of purpose sprung out of the grassroots effort by 1970s-era back-to-the-landers seeking access to good food at a fair price: a unifying story among food co-ops across the country. We are proud to be an anchor of downtown Belfast for over 45 years and with your help we will thrive here for 45 more.

Our Co-op serves more than 4,900 co-op owners and provides secure employment for 75+ dedicated local workers. Local farmers and producers in Waldo County rely on us as a year-round storefront to sell their fresh produce, local cheeses, fresh meats, and more. Our Co-op, along with 5,000 other food co-ops across the country, have been successfully adapting to the ever changing landscape of the natural food market. With the strong leadership of our General Manager and dedication of our workers, we continue to keep our shelves stocked by featuring local producers and widening our net of distribution companies. Although our world continues to change in unforeseeable ways, our financial situation is strong and we remain a vital anchor for downtown Belfast, Waldo County, and our local and regional food systems.

Join us as a steward of the Co-op and its mission, keeping the Co-op at the heart of the greater Belfast Community. The Board of Directors plays a critical role in ensuring the continued success of the Co-op by setting the standards and policies for the Co-op's performance and promoting the Co-op's values and vision. Serving on the Board is challenging, rewarding, and offers valuable benefits to our greater Belfast Community.

Our dedicated owners are at the heart of our business- our Co-op is a democratically governed and community owned business that strives to be an inclusive cooperative enterprise. The Board, representing the owners, continues to work with the General Manager in assessing our ongoing needs and projects, including the renovation project for the store.

This year, **five** seats are up for election. We seek candidates to be part of a Board that is as broadly diverse as the member-owners we are elected to represent. We hope to elect new Board members that possess diverse experiences and talents, bringing new ideas and perspectives to our conversations and decision-making.

The attached candidate package includes the application form and information to help you better understand the role of a Board member. **Applications are due November 15, 2023.** Other important dates are listed on the next page.

Thank you again for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you!

Cooperatively yours,

Belfast Community Co-op Board of Directors

bdcomm@belfast.coop

2024 Nomination Packet

2024 Director Seats and Nomination Process

The Board is seeking to fill **five** seats in 2024. When all seats are filled, the Board may have as many as thirteen members.

The nomination period will run through November 15, 2023. The Board will set the ballot for the election at its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 28, 2024. The election begins at the 2024 Annual Meeting, expected to be held in March 2024.

Candidates begin the nomination process by submitting the application form included in this packet (or completing the online version through Google Forms: [Board Nomination Form 2024](#)) by **November 15, 2023**. Candidate statements will be circulated to owners prior to the election. Candidates are expected to introduce themselves at the Annual Meeting in March 2024.

IMPORTANT NOTE: While in past years submission of the application form was generally sufficient to place an interested person on the ballot for election to the Board, for this year's election the Board has established additional application requirements and procedures aimed at ensuring that applicants have a solid idea of how the Board operates and the amount and types of work and expectations they will have signed up for by becoming elected to Board membership. The additional requirements will also allow newly elected Board Members to begin their term on the Board with a good understanding of the way the Board works. These requirements are not intended to be exclusionary — any Co-op member who completes all requirements will have a place on the 2024 ballot.

The requirements for completion of the application process and placement on the 2024 election ballot are described below. Applicants who find themselves unable to complete one or more of the requirements may at any time request that the Board consider waiver of a specific requirement by addressing an email to board@belfast.coop explaining the circumstances that require a waiver. Applicants who fail to either complete all application requirements or have missing requirements waived by February 1, 2024, will be considered to not have fully completed the application process and their names will not be added to the final ballot at the February 28, 2024, regular Board meeting.

You Can Get More Information About the Application Process by Attending an Online Q & A Session

Get your questions about the application and election process answered at an optional information session offered to interested potential candidates on Wednesday, [October 11th](#) and Wednesday, [November 1st](#) at 6 pm via Zoom. Click the date to register for either of the sessions or email board@belfast.coop for more information.

Important Election Dates and Nomination Requirements

✓ Director Nomination Application Form

Applicants are required to fully complete the attached application form and file it in person at the Co-op Service Desk, by regular mail or delivery, by email at board@belfast.coop, or by completing and filing the online [Board Nomination Form 2024](#), no later than Thursday, **November 15, 2023**. All parts of the application must be completed, or an explanation must be attached for why any part of the form was not completed. In addition to basic identifying information, the application requires submission of the name and Co-op number of two

references, submission of a photographic image of yourself, and submission of a candidate statement that describes your interest and reasons for running for election to the Board and answers specific questions on the application form.

✓ **Meeting with Assigned Board Member Contact**

Each applicant will be assigned a current Board Member to act as a contact and resource for information about Board procedures and election procedures. Applicants should make contact with their assigned Board Member as soon as possible, and are required to have at least one discussion with the Board Member (in person, by telephone, or Zoom) before February 1, 2024.

✓ **Attendance at Board Meetings**

We require applicants to attend in full at least two regular monthly Board meetings prior to February 1, 2024. Meetings are from 6:00 - 8:30 pm in the Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library. While attendance in person is preferred, meetings may also be attended by Zoom, if necessary. To see the meeting agenda, please visit: [Board of Directors – Belfast Co-op](#). Information about Zoom attendance may also be found at that same link. Upcoming meetings that fulfill this requirement are scheduled for the following 2023 dates: **September 27, October 25, November 29, December 20**; and on **January 24, 2024**.

✓ **Board Candidate Orientation to Board Operations Sessions**

We require applicants to attend one of two Board Candidate Orientation Sessions, either **December 6, 2023**, or **January 3, 2024**. This two-hour introduction to being a Director will provide applicants with basic information about Board governance, processes, culture, and expectations.

✓ **Committee Meetings**

We strongly encourage (but do not require) applicants to attend a Board committee meeting to get a better understanding of the work the Board does through its standing committees. You can send an email to any of the addresses below to confirm committee meeting dates and to get more information about the work each committee does.

- Owner Engagement Committee: ownercomm@belfast.coop
- Finance Committee: fincomm@belfast.coop
- Board Development Committee: bdcomm@belfast.coop

✓ **2024 Director Election Ballot Finalized**

The Board will finalize and set the 2024 Board of Directors Election Ballot at its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 28, 2024. Only applicants who have completed all application requirements will be placed on the ballot.

✓ **Election Begins at the Annual Meeting**

The election process begins at the Co-op's Annual Meeting, tentatively scheduled for March 3, 2024. Candidates will be expected to introduce themselves at the Annual Meeting.

✓ **Certification of Election**

The Board will certify the results of the election at its next regular meeting after the election period is concluded.

✓ **Seating of Newly Elected Members**

Board Members newly elected or re-elected will be seated by the Board after certification of the election results.

Additional Information

Board's Role

The BOD has fiduciary responsibility for the Co-op and is directly accountable to the owners. The BOD's essential role is to set and monitor policy that guides the Co-op's management and to ensure that all decisions are ethical and in accordance with the Co-op's bylaws and ends, and with cooperative principles.

The Board governs the organization and delegates all operational duties to the General Manager. The Board is involved in:

- Strategic planning
- Financial and legal oversight
- Member-owner linkage
- Community outreach

The Board of Directors does not make decisions regarding the operation of the Belfast Community Co-op store. The Board's sole official connection to the operations of the Co-op is through the General Manager.

Policy Governance

The Belfast Community Co-op Board operates using a Policy Governance model which sets up guidelines, called policies, within which the General Manager and the Board maintain accountability for operational performance and provide visionary leadership towards our shared mission. These policies are the primary way the Board conveys its expectations and the policies are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. The General Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the store, and the Board determines the purpose, vision, and goals for the organization's future based on Owner input. Policy Governance more clearly defines and focuses Board work on long-range policy decisions, and not operational responsibilities. This system of governance requires attention, training, and practice.

Ends Statement

The Co-op's Ends statement clarifies the mission and directs the actions of the co-op.

The Belfast Co-op exists so that our member-owners and our community will have:

- A thriving, just, and sustainable local food economy
- A source of healthy, nutritious, affordable food, and water
- An efficiently managed, democratically governed, inclusive cooperative enterprise
- A greater understanding of health, food systems, cooperatives, and economic & environmental sustainability
- An invested, engaged, and empowered staff that thrive in a safe, respectful, inclusive, and equitable workplace.

What Makes a Co-op, a Co-op?

Definition: A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

Values: Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.

Principles:

- 1 - Voluntary and Open Membership
- 2 - Democratic Member Control
- 3 - Member Economic Participation
- 4 - Autonomy and Independence
- 5 - Education, Training, and Information
- 6 - Cooperation among Cooperatives
- 7 - Concern for Community

Modified Consensus Decision Making

The Board uses modified consensus decision making in its meetings. This process considers the input from all directors and aims to develop as much agreement as possible, while respecting dissenting opinions. This helps generate a cooperative, collaborative group atmosphere to foster greater group cohesion and interpersonal connection. If consensus cannot be reached, the Board uses a supermajority of two-thirds to break any impasse on important or time sensitive issues. Once the Board makes a decision, all directors must support that decision.

Meetings and Events

- **Board Meetings.** The Board meets once a month, usually the 4th Wednesday of the month, 6 pm to 8:30 pm. The Board meetings are held at the Belfast Free Library's Abbott Room, with the option to attend through Zoom if unable to attend in person. One to two hours of reading is required to prepare for each meeting, generally in a combination of emails and a board packet provided prior to the meeting.
- **Committee Meetings.** The Board has three (3) standing committees: Finance, Owner Engagement, and Board Development. Directors must serve on at least one committee. Committees generally meet once a month.
- **Annual Retreat.** A one-day training retreat is held each year. Directors are expected to attend. The date for the 2024 retreat is not yet established.
- **Training Events.** Directors are supported and encouraged to attend co-op national and regional conferences and educational workshops throughout the year.

To review the Belfast Community Co-op's Bylaws and Policy Register, or to read past Board of Directors meeting minutes, visit our website at [Board Of Directors – Belfast Co-op](#).

Director (Board Member) Job Description

Summary:

The Belfast Community Co-op's Board of Directors consists of 9-13 members elected by the owners. The Board has fiduciary responsibility for the Co-op and is directly accountable to the owners. It ensures that all business is conducted legally, prudently, ethically, and in accordance with the Co-op's bylaws and ends, and with cooperative principles.¹ The Board carries out its responsibilities by establishing broad policy guidelines and by monitoring the General Manager's adherence to these guidelines.

Board Responsibilities and Commitments:

- Interacting with owners to understand their needs, values, and visions for the Co-op
- Developing, monitoring, and revising a body of policies to guide the Board and the General Manager to achieve outcomes that are consistent with our owner's values and vision.²
- Hiring, evaluating, and working effectively with the General Manager.
- Attend all Board and appropriate Committee meetings and arrive prepared to contribute to discussions and decision-making, including carefully reading the board packet in advance of every monthly meeting. Devote the time needed to do this work well, approximately 10-15 hours/month for meetings, emails, ongoing training, preparation, and other activities.
- Monitor the Co-op's financial status and plan to position the Co-op for ongoing success.
- Planning for the Co-op's future, recruiting new board members, and setting long-range goals.
- Keep informed of cooperative/democratic organizations and learn about natural foods industry trends through trainings and other educational opportunities.
- Adhere to the Board's Code of Conduct, policy C5 - Code of Conduct of the Policy Register².

The board is **not** involved in the daily operations of the store.

Bylaw Requirements for Director Candidates:

- A candidate must be a member-owner in good standing (up-to-date on annual equity payments).
- Members of the management team of the Co-op (the General Manager and those reporting directly to the General Manager) are NOT eligible to be a director.

Qualifications and Helpful Experience:

- Excellent communication skills including the ability to listen actively, speak honestly and openly in group discussion, while also being able to abide by decisions arrived at by the Board
- Ability to work closely with other Directors as a cohesive team, make decisions by consensus, and delegate authority and empower others
- A vision and commitment to make decisions for the long-term success of the Co-op
- Ability to synthesize complex information and share understanding of this information
- Comfortable talking and working with owners and other groups
- Commitment to making Board work and responsibilities a priority
- Experience serving on a board of directors or other organizational committees

¹ Bylaws @ <https://belfast.coop/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Belfast-Cooperative-Bylaws-24Sept2020.pdf>, Ends, p. 4 of the Policy Register @ <https://belfast.coop/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Policy-Register-Revised-2022-10-26.pdf>, Cooperative principles @ <https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>

² These policies are in the Policy Register @ <https://belfast.coop/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Policy-Register-Revised-2022-10-26.pdf>

- Background in business or community outreach
- Experience with cooperatives, and their values and principles
- Ability to read financial reports (or commitment to learning how to do so)

Benefits:

- Opportunity to provide meaningful service to the local community and economy
- Leadership, professional and personal development opportunities
- A small monthly stipend of \$40 in the form of a Co-op gift card
- Opportunity to work with a committed, principled, capable, and fun group of people

Thank you for your interest in serving on the Board of the Belfast Community Co-op!

Director Nomination Application Form

Name _____ Owner # _____

Address _____ Town _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____ Current occupation _____

Phone #(s) _____

This application gives us information about your background and expertise, what you can offer to the Belfast Community Co-op, and what interests you about serving on the Board. The information you provide will communicate to others why you should become a Director.

Each applicant will be assigned a current member of the Board to answer questions and act as a resource about the election process, but feel free to also talk to any other Directors to get personal perspectives on what service on the Belfast Community Co-op Board of Directors is all about.

Commitments:

By submitting this application:

- I make a commitment that if elected I am able and willing to fulfill the responsibilities, including time and work requirements, of a Belfast Community Co-op Board Member for a full three-year term.
- I make a commitment to complete all requirements of the Board Candidate application process, no later than February 1, 2024, including:
 - Attending in full at least two regular monthly Board meetings;
 - Attending a scheduled Board Candidate Orientation Session;
 - Meeting at least once with a current Board member assigned to be my informational contact for the election process;
 - Fully completing this Director Nomination Application Form, including the requests for references, a photographic image, and a candidate statement responding to the questions provided as prompts.

Please provide the following:

- References.** Please list two references, including their names and Co-op owner numbers.

1. Name: _____ Owner #: _____

2. Name: _____ Owner #: _____

- Image.** Please include a current photograph of yourself. A digitally submitted headshot is preferred. Please avoid “selfies”. If you are unable to provide a photograph, please contact Alessandra Martinelli at alessandra@belfast.coop for assistance.

□ **Applicant Statement.** In a typed document to be attached or included with the application, please respond to the following questions in the form of a brief (600 words or less) candidate statement that will be shared with Co-op member-owners. It is important that you include responses to these questions when writing your statement:

1. Why would you like to serve on the Belfast Community Co-op Board? What excites you about becoming a Board Member?
2. Please describe any skills you have that will help you to be an effective Board Member.
3. What in your previous life experiences will be valuable to your participation on the Co-op Board?
4. Describe any prior involvement with community organizations and/or cooperatives. What did you learn from these experiences?

The deadline for submitting a completed application is November 15, 2023:

- By email to bdcomm@belfast.coop
- Through filling out the Google Form at: [Board Nomination Form 2024](#)
- In person to Customer Service at the store, OR
- By snail mail to: Belfast Community Co-op 123 High St, Belfast, ME 04915, Attn: BOD Nominations

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Checklist of Application Requirements

First: Complete all parts of this application form by November 15, 2023, including:

- Checking box making commitment to fulfill responsibilities as Board member, if elected;
- Checking box acknowledging your commitment to complete all application requirements;
- Including names and Co-op owner numbers of two references;
- Attaching a photograph of yourself (or making arrangements with the Co-op for assistance);
- Attaching a written candidate statement about your experiences and why you want to join the Board;
- Filing the completed application, with attachments, in person, by postal mail, or by email.

Second: Complete other application requirements by February 1, 2024, including:

- Attending in full at least two regular monthly Board meetings;
- Attending a Board Candidate Orientation Session;
- Meeting at least once with the Board member assigned to be your informational contact.

Interested in running but feeling overwhelmed or want more information?

We want to make your application as painless as possible and will help you along the way!

Please reach out to us by email to board@belfast.coop if you find yourself having difficulty with any of these requirements. Maybe it's not clear to you exactly what is being requested; or maybe you think completing one or another of the requirements may just not be possible for you; or maybe you've just hit a bad case of writer's block when composing your candidate statement. Let us know. We'd love to talk with you and work it out.