



2026 Board Election Packet

Dear Potential Board Member,

Thank you for your interest! This packet exists to give you an overview about Board service—what the Board does and how we operate—so you can decide if a leadership position with Common Ground Food Co-op's Board is right for you.

After you review the information in this packet, we encourage you to reach out to us with questions, participate in the candidate information sessions, and take action to be as involved as you'd like to be with the Co-op, whether or not you decide to pursue Board service.

We hope this offers you an idea of how things operate behind the scenes at Common Ground and what roles owners can play in creating the change we want to see in our community and beyond.

In Cooperation,

The Common Ground Food Co-op Board of Directors

APPLICATION PROCESS

1) Read this packet and attend an optional Board Candidate information session or Board meeting.

2) Submit your application by the end of the day on August 11, 2026.

Application Link: <https://www.commonground.coop/ownership/elections>

3) Once your application has been received and reviewed, a current Board member will contact you to set up an interview.

4) The Board Development Committee will be screening candidates to ensure all potential Board candidates meet a minimum level of qualifications. The screening will be based on the written application and an in-person interview.

If a potential candidate is screened out through this process and is still interested in running, the bylaws allow any eligible owner to have a space on the ballot by petition with 10 owner signatures. That status will be noted on the ballot.

We'll officially announce the slate of candidates on August 31, 2026.

5) All candidates are strongly encouraged to attend a board meeting as guests to familiarize themselves with how board meetings operate.

6) Consider attending the annual Meeting of Owners (MOO), which is the final day of voting. While optional, many owners appreciate the opportunity to meet candidates in person in addition to reading your answers to the application questions. Application answers are posted in the store, online, and available on the electronic ballot.

IMPORTANT DATES, DEADLINES AND EVENTS

July 1	Candidate packet available	In store and online
July 20, 5:30pm	Board meeting	In store and virtual
August 11, end of day	Application due online	Online via Google Form
August 17, 5:30pm	Board meeting	In store and virtual
August 12-23	Candidate screening interviews (by appointment)	Flatlander Classroom
August 23-30	Petition period	In store
September 1	Candidate slate announced to the public	In store and online
September 21, 5:30pm	Board meeting	In store and virtual
September TBA	Meeting of Owners Voting concludes	To Be Announced
October 19, 5:30pm	Board meeting	In store and virtual
November 7, 8am-5pm	Board retreat	In Person

WHAT DOES THE BOARD DO?

THE BOARD SETS POLICY

The primary function of the Board is crafting policy defining the work of the Common Ground Food Co-op (CGFC). To accomplish this, the Board uses a Policy Governance Model. This approach to governance emphasizes empowerment and accountability. The most far-reaching of our policies define the **Ends** of CGFC. They are:

- **The Co-op is the center of an inclusive, vibrant community.**
- **The cooperative movement is strengthened.**
- **The Co-op serves as an educational resource on food issues.**
- **The local food movement is equitable, robust and environmentally sound.**
- **The Co-op supports our community's resilience while ensuring its own economic stability.**

You can think of it this way - our store serves as a means to these Ends. Access to fresh, sustainably produced, or local food is what owners expect, but doing this also satisfies each of these Ends in a particular way. Ends Policies answer questions like "Why does Common Ground exist?" or "What changes does it make in the world?" or "And for whose benefit?". The Board delegates accomplishing these Ends to the Co-op's General Manager and receives regular progress reports.

THE BOARD DELEGATES OPERATIONS

The Board of Common Ground Food Co-op does not manage our store's day-to-day operations. Board members hold no individual power over staff or store policy. The Board does not directly implement operational details of store performance; instead, a General Manager (GM), hired by the Board, handles the running of CGFC. Board members steer long-term goals for CGFC, and their deliberations and resolutions guide the GM toward fulfilling our Co-op's mission.

THE BOARD BUILDS THE FUTURE

On a more nuts and bolts level, the Board is the critical catalyst for continued evolution at CGFC. Therefore, the Board ensures communication with the ownership and responds to owner concerns. Beyond responsibility to equity holders, the Board is legally accountable to the State of Illinois for the actions of CGFC. Therefore it must craft policy to ensure that the organization operates legally and prudently. The Board also provides continuity. Board terms are three years; however, Board members may aspire to serve several terms to learn the way the organization works, thus providing leadership and stewardship for generations ahead. Through its actions, the Board shapes the future of CGFC, encompassing the ownership's diverse interests, issues, passions, and concerns. Hopefully, these actions will encourage owners to further their personal involvement at Common Ground Food Co-op.

BOARD SERVICE Q&A

Q: Who can run for the Board?

A: Any Co-op owner in good standing may run for the Board. “Good standing” means that your equity (owner share) is paid in full and that your current, correct contact information is on file with the Co-op. Board members may not be relatives of the General Manager. For the purposes of eligibility, relatives are defined to include spouses, parents, children, brothers, sisters, brothers- and sisters-in-law, fathers- and mothers-in-law, stepparents, stepbrothers, stepsisters, and stepchildren. No Board member shall reside with or date the General Manager.

Q: Why is there a candidate screening process?

A: The candidate screening process is designed to ensure candidates have proper expectations about board service and that all candidates meet a minimum set of qualifications. While prior experience on a Board may be helpful, we don’t want anyone to think it is required. The board hopes to have a diverse set of members with different perspectives, career fields, and life experiences. Below are some characteristics that the screening process looks for.

Contemplation

- Listens to other points of view with an open mind
- Weighs information critically and considers multiple scenarios and consequences when making a decision
- Thinks through scenarios and more than one set of consequences for a decision

Communication

- Articulates their ideas in a way others can understand
- Explains their thoughts in a coherent manner

Preparation

- Is ready to be an active participant
- Has the time and energy that is required to be on the Board

Co-operation

- Is able to be respectful of alternative views
- Is excited about community engagement
- Is passionate about our co-op

Q: How many owners serve on the Board?

A: The Board consists of at most 9 elected owners. There are four officers – President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. Officers are elected by the Board at the first meeting with newly elected directors.

Q: How long are the terms?

A: Full Board terms are three (3) years. Partial terms are dependent on the expiration of the original term. Newly elected Board members will begin their service at the October board meeting. Each three-year term will last until 2029.

Q: How many seats are up for election in 2026?

A: There are six seats up for election this year. Three of these seats are for the full three-year term 2026-2029. Two seats are for a two-year term 2026-2028. One seat is for a one-year term 2026-2027.

Q: Do owners still vote if the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of seats?

A: Yes. All our Board members must be democratically elected in accordance with our bylaws. Article 4, section 3 states, "All directors shall be elected by secret ballot, and the nominee(s) receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected." They need your votes!

Q: When are Board meetings?

A: Meetings are the third Monday of each month from 5:30-7:30 PM. Directors are expected to attend board meetings in person, but a virtual option is available for Directors who cannot participate in person upon request.

Q. How do I find out what happens at a Board meeting?

A. Candidates are strongly encouraged to attend a board meeting to familiarize themselves with what happens at a Board meeting. Meetings are always open to owners. Minutes from the meeting are posted under the minutes section of the Co-op's website after approval by the Board, about a month after the meeting. Reading past meeting minutes would be a good way to learn what the Board is doing and what you could expect at a meeting.

Q: How does the Board stay in contact between meetings?

A: The Co-op Board primarily communicates through email and Google Workplace between meetings. In addition to the monthly Board meetings, Board members typically meet on a monthly basis in Executive Session. Each committee also meets either in person or online between meetings. Board members are expected to have access to email and the internet and be able to use both regularly (several times a week) or arrange otherwise reasonable accommodations.

Q: What is the time commitment for an individual Board member?

A: We estimate the average monthly time spent to be approximately 10 to 15 hours. Board members are expected to prepare for and attend each monthly Board meeting and Executive Session as scheduled (these are separate dates). Preparation includes reading reports and other materials, participating in committee meetings, owner events, conference calls, additional optional working groups, and preparing materials for the Board.

Q: Do Board members get paid?

A: Board members are not paid but do receive a store credit of \$100 at the end of each month to thank them for their service and work. You will receive a 1099-MISC for this compensation each January.

Q: I have another question; how can I get more information?

A: Great! Please send us an email at Board@commonground.coop.