



The
**CO-OPERATIVE
HOUSING
FEDERATION**
of Canada



Young Member Engagement Strategy





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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Our Young Member Engagement Strategy proposes a healthy, intergenerational co-operative housing movement with active leaders and members of all ages. The strategy builds upon research gathered from housing co-ops, regional federations, and sector organizations from across the country. It presents a plan for our movement with a co-ordinated and intentional approach to engaging more young members in the governance of housing co-ops and our sector.

Housing co-operatives have an important mandate to secure their success for future generations. This strategy is designed to meet that mandate by ensuring that the passion, knowledge and dedication of current co-op members are shared with emerging leaders, and that the new ideas and knowledge of emerging leaders have a voice and space to grow.

Housing co-ops and those involved in the sector have a long history of actively engaging youth. This strategy builds on that experience by presenting a series of actions or best practices, many of which are already being used within our movement. Together, these actions offer a coherent approach to young member engagement.

The intention is that co-ops and federations select from the strategy the actions that are appropriate to their existing and future needs. It has been developed so that any co-op or federation can use parts of the strategy, whether they are new to young member engagement or already have a program. The focus of all the actions is deliberate, intentional young member recruitment, retention and engagement at all key points of a young person's life. The strategy has also been developed so that members of all ages have a role in supporting young member engagement.

We have tried to make the strategy as practical and results-oriented as possible. Each part of the strategy begins with a statement, followed by suggested actions, resources and tips and ways to measure our progress. In the coming years, we will be encouraging co-ops and regional federations to measure, share and reflect upon their results so that we learn from our experiences and build on our success.

The Young Member Engagement Strategy was initiated by a member resolution at CHF Canada's 2011 Annual General Meeting. We wish to thank our consultants, The Students Commission of Canada who helped us develop this strategy in consultation with regional federations and young leaders. We also wish to thank all those who were consulted in this process, especially the members of the young member reference group.

YOUNG MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

UNDER 16

Youth activities:

Picnics, sports, forums, aspire to be a member

Result: Engaged co-op youth

16–18

Turning of age:

Member recruitment, training, recognition

Result: More young members, leadership development

16–18

Scholarships:

Support for application process, volunteering, mentoring

Result: Demonstrated investment in young co-op leaders

16–29

Sector involvement:

Support young member engagement at sector events

Result: Involvement in co-op movement, young-member led workshops

16–29

Young leaders networks:

Social media, regional and national networking sessions

Result: Information sharing and peer support

16–29

Leadership development:

Recruitment, support and mentoring of young leaders

Result: More young leaders in co-op governance

16–29

Co-op membership:

Promoting co-op housing and reducing barriers to new members

Result: New young members

22–29

Professional development:

Subsidies for training in co-op governance and management

Result: New generation of leaders and managers

Intergenerational learning:

Sector training, education and engagement about young member involvement

Result: Intergenerational learning and support

STRATEGY COMPONENTS

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

UNDER 16

Youth activities:

Picnics, sports, forums, aspire to be a member

Result: Engaged co-op youth

Co-op residents of all ages have a role to play in their community. Involving children and youth early in co-op activities helps to develop interest and commitment to co-op principles, our movement and future involvement in co-op governance.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Many co-ops already offer activities for youth including barbecues, picnics, sports days, discussion groups, and youth-led workshops. These events are ideal opportunities to build relationships between adults and youth. Be deliberate about engaging youth in the planning, decision-making and leadership of activities. Use these activities to talk informally about the roles, responsibilities and advantages of being a co-op member.
- ✓ Co-op young leaders' camps and regional education events can provide valuable opportunities to increase young people's interest in the co-op sector and to acquire leadership skills. Regional federations and CHF Canada should actively support co-op young leader camps by sponsoring and promoting the programs, and partnering with other organizations to ensure that co-op youth are able to take part.
- ✓ Regional federations and CHF Canada can support this engagement by offering information on how to effectively engage youth through workshops, newsletters and other resources.

RESOURCES:

There are many resources available to help co-ops plan events on the internet. To help you find these resources, search for activity guides, community builders, youth engagement, and adult allies. For example, see SEVEC's team building activities (www.sevec.ca/wp-content/themes/sevec/PDFs/Guides-Team-Building%20Activities.pdf).

TIPS:

- Ask youth what activities they want to do and then ask them to help plan.
- Effective activities involve partnership and shared leadership between youth and adults. Help young people lead by supporting their efforts.
- Be patient. Ask questions to help youth clarify and figure out what they want to do. Asking more questions and making fewer statements is an effective strategy for working with youth.
- Provide a physical space where youth can design their own activities, and their own rules.
- Talk informally about the roles, responsibilities and advantages of being a member during activities.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

Evaluating what you do helps you get better and gives your participants a voice. It's a part of good governance. Here's a simple sample: <http://tools.engagementsurvey.ca/tools03.php>.

TURNING OF AGE

16–18

Turning of age:

Member recruitment, training, recognition

Result: More young members, leadership development

Depending on government rules, eligibility for co-op membership begins at age 16. Co-ops should work to ensure that co-op membership is open to all who qualify and encourage young people in the co-op to become members when eligible.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Co-ops and regional federations can hold activities that recruit young people to share information about co-op membership and volunteering, its benefits and obligations, and offer training about governance and advocacy. These can include interactive workshops and discussion groups on issues facing the co-op.

These activities may be most effective if they are led by young members, with support from board members and co-op managers. Where possible, co-ops should look to existing young leaders in the co-op to lead workshops or discussion groups.

- ✓ Co-ops can also support membership as something to aspire to by recognizing new members at members' meetings or other social events.
- ✓ Regional federations and CHF Canada offer resources on the benefits of membership, and can promote young people becoming members in their communication with co-ops.

RESOURCES:

CHF Canada online resources including, *What is a housing co-op* (www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pages2007/about_1.asp), and *Welcoming and orienting new members* (www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pdf/AGM_2009/106_Welcoming_and_orienting_new_members.pdf) can help your co-op explain the benefits and obligations of being a co-op member.

TIPS:

- Encourage young people in your co-op to get information about becoming a co-op member. Talk to them about the roles, responsibilities and advantages of membership.
- Integrate recognition of new members into existing social events or members' meetings. Invite young people to contribute to planning and organizing new member recognition.
- If you see an opportunity, or have enough young people turning of age in a year, create an "occasion" to have a turning-of-age ceremony, either separately or incorporated into an existing event, such as a barbecue.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

Co-ops are encouraged to get feedback on the activities they hold. See <http://tools.engagementsurvey.ca/tools03.php> and <http://tools.engagementsurvey.ca/tools02.php> for sample forms.

DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

16–18

Scholarships:

Support for application process, volunteering, mentoring

Result: Demonstrated investment in young co-op leaders

The Diversity Scholarship Program is a valuable way to support young co-op residents and their families, and create a sense of belonging in the community. Supported by regional federations and CHF Canada, this program is now available in many regions across the country. Many scholarship winners have gone on to become active in co-op leadership and governance, by joining the boards of their co-op, regional federation, or CHF Canada.

ACTIONS:

The Diversity Scholarship Program offers a range of opportunities for young member engagement in co-ops and regional federations.

- ✓ Co-ops can help engage their young people by promoting the program, encouraging their young people to apply, and supporting them through the application process. The program is also a great opportunity to promote engagement on co-op boards or committees.
- ✓ Regional federations can engage young people by offering information sessions or one-on-one mentoring in the program and the application process. They can also encourage involvement in planning award ceremonies that honour recipients. This can lead to a new pool of young people aware of and engaged in their federation.
- ✓ Past scholarship winners should be integrated into promotion of the program and strongly encouraged to share their experience with other young people in their co-op or at regional federation events.
- ✓ Regional federations and CHF Canada should consider expanding the Diversity Scholarship Program to regions where it does not already exist.
- ✓ Promote student co-ops to diversity scholarship winners as a housing option while attending post-secondary education.

RESOURCES:

Regional Federation materials on the programs across the country.

TIPS:

- Personally invite/recommend young residents in your co-op to apply for a diversity scholarship.
- Distribute information about the diversity scholarship program to parents in your co-op. Encourage them to get their children to apply.
- Federations can encourage scholarship winners to become more engaged in the greater co-op movement by offering the students Board Basics training, including them in events, and inviting them to take part in advocacy work.

DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM CONTINUED

MEASURING SUCCESS:

Programs should annually collect data on

- applicants
- scholarships awarded
- scholarship winners that attend a board of directors course
- scholarship winners that are board members
- scholarship winners that graduate from post-secondary institutions
- scholarship winners that undertake a course of study or research related to the co-op sector

Document the processes that are effective in engaging and supporting applicants and their families. This could be through short video blogs/interviews shared on websites.



YOUNG MEMBER ENGAGEMENT IN SECTOR EVENTS

16–29

Sector involvement:

Support young member engagement at sector events

Result: Involvement in co-op movement, young-member led workshops

An effective way to foster young member engagement is to offer incentives to attend sector activities such as regional education events, regional federation events and CHF Canada’s annual meeting. It’s an exciting opportunity for co-op members to acquire new skills, learn about our movement and network and share experiences.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Recruit young members to attend annual meetings, regional education events, or other sector-related events. All who attend should be encouraged to report back to their co-op to share their experiences with other co-op members and the board.
- ✓ Young members should be fully integrated into the events and, where possible, encouraged to be involved in event planning. Regional federations and CHF Canada should recruit younger members to be workshop leaders when possible and offer incentives to help co-ops send young people.

RESOURCES:

Regional federations and CHF Canada offer ongoing information about opportunities, bursaries and subsidies to encourage young member attendance at sector events.

TIPS:

- Offer special opportunities for young member networking.
- Prior to an event, prepare young members so they know what to expect when they get there.
- Invite young members to present a report on what they learned at a co-op members’ meeting.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Track the number of young members attending sector events in comparison to total event attendance.
- Track participants’ perceived quality and outcomes of events/ activities (see sample form: <http://tools.engagementsurvey.ca/tools02.php>).



YOUNG LEADER NETWORKING

16–29

Young leaders networks:

Social media, regional and national networking sessions

Result: Information sharing and peer support

Opportunities for young leader networking may encourage greater involvement and commitment on topics of interest. A young leaders network can help sustain young member involvement.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ CHF Canada and regional federations can support regional and national young member networks through social media. The networks can be a space where young people share ideas and inspire each other to become more involved in the leadership of the movement. CHF Canada and regional federations can also support informal opportunities for young delegates to network at events.
- ✓ CHF Canada's annual young member networking session gives participants a chance to meet face to face.

RESOURCES:

CHF Canada's annual emerging leader networking session.

TIPS:

- If a young member from your co-op attends a sector event (e.g. AGM), help them encourage other young co-op members to get involved.
- Offer young members a space and resources to organize a forum to talk to their peers about what they learned at sector events, and how they can get involved.
- Encourage and support interested young leaders to form ongoing informal networks, whether regionally or nationally, to discuss and take action on issues that interest them. Encourage these young leaders to bring back information from these networks to the board.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Track attendance at annual CHF Canada young member networking/caucus and similar events regionally.
- Track total number of young people reached and/or consulted via online networking platforms.



YOUNG MEMBER ENGAGEMENT IN GOVERNANCE

16–29

Leadership development:

Recruitment, support and mentoring of young leaders

Result: More young leaders in co-op governance

In 2012, CHF Canada’s biennial survey of co-ops found that one-third of housing co-ops had at least one board member under the age of 30. Representation at regional and national levels is somewhat less. A board of directors should represent the diversity of its members, including young co-op members. Co-ops, regional federations and CHF Canada should actively recruit young members to their board, and support and mentor them as directors.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Personally identify and invite young members to run for the board.
- ✓ Taking part in the 2020 Compass process can help co-ops clarify their vision for the future including leadership renewal. During the process, set goals for young member engagement in the leadership of your co-op. Consider what may be the barriers to young members joining your board, and identify strategies to overcome them. Speak to your members about why leadership renewal is important for your co-op.
- ✓ Mentoring new directors is a key part of ensuring their ongoing engagement. Mentorship should be a two-way process where new directors can learn the board’s roles and responsibilities, and experienced directors get feedback and hear about new ideas. Activities like co-chairing meetings can help give new directors confidence as they step into their new role. New directors can also be mentored by other young board members at regional events, and through young member networks.
- ✓ Like all board members, new young board members should be given the opportunity to receive formal training on their role as a director.

RESOURCES:

Materials on the CHF Canada website about governance (www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/res_governing.asp), CHF Canada’s Be the One video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7xO1a9lZDw&list=UUIzrSiD8riyRGO8x5UDfnRw&index=5), and the 2020 Compass (www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/2020compass.asp).



YOUNG MEMBER ENGAGEMENT IN GOVERNANCE CONTINUED

TIPS:

- Invite a 2020 Compass facilitator to work with your co-op to clarify your vision and mission. Personally invite young members to join the process.
- Consider introducing term limits for board and committee positions.
- Setting a goal of having at least two young members on your board can help focus your efforts. Having two or more young members on the board can also help the new directors feel more comfortable.
- Young leaders often have very busy lives. Help your co-op's young members take part in co-op governance by being flexible, and strive to adopt the good governance practices of having board meetings only once a month.
- Support young families by offering free babysitting services during board and members' meetings.
- Consider establishing a board mentoring program.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Track number of people under 30 on your co-op's board and report your findings on CHF Canada's biennial co-op survey.
- Invite co-ops and regional federations to post success stories online to share ways to reduce barriers to and outcomes from having young members involved in governance.



PROMOTE LIVING IN CO-OP HOUSING TO YOUNGER AUDIENCES

16–29

Co-op membership:

Promoting co-op housing and reducing barriers to new members

Result: New young members

Membership in housing co-ops should be open to all who are eligible. Barriers to membership should be removed and housing co-ops should welcome new young members.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Promote co-op housing as an attractive housing option, especially to younger audiences not currently living in co-op housing. If you haven't recently, review your co-op's membership process to ensure that it meets the co-op principle of voluntary and open membership and the guidelines set out in your province's Human Rights legislation.
- ✓ Engage young members in designing strategies and materials to find opportunities to promote co-op housing to a younger market.
- ✓ Promote student co-ops to young people as a housing option while attending post-secondary education.

RESOURCES:

Regional federations and CHF Canada can develop marketing and promotional material to support co-ops' efforts to market co-op housing to a younger audience. CHF Canada's Resource Centre offers materials to help co-ops review their membership process, such as the AHP Member Selection Overview (www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pdf/ResourceDocs/ahp-resources/AHP-member-selection-overview.pdf)

TIPS:

- Review your co-op's membership process and selection criteria and remove barriers to membership for new young members.
- Invite young members to be involved in reviewing the membership process and selection criteria.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Invite co-ops and regional federations to post success stories online about how they reduced barriers to new young members joining the co-op and what the outcomes were of their efforts.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

22–29

Professional development:

Subsidies for training in co-op governance and management

Result: New generation of leaders and managers

Managers of housing co-ops are an important part of the leadership of our movement. Changing demographics means we need to replace retiring professionals in the coming years. CHF Canada and regional federations should ensure young members have access to information about employment in the co-operative sector.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ With the advice of young managers and other staff, co-ops, regional federations and CHF Canada can promote working in the sector as an attractive career.
- ✓ CHF Canada and regional federations should continue to offer professional development opportunities for new staff, and ensure that they are accessible to young people starting off in their careers by offering subsidies and bursaries.
- ✓ Regional federations and CHF Canada will seek out employment funding programs for co-ops and management companies, encourage the creation of employment opportunities for young co-op members, and encourage mentorship of young professionals in property management companies.
- ✓ Co-ops, regional federations and CHF Canada can help inspire young members by creating opportunities for young members to meet sector leaders and share information about careers in co-op housing. This can happen at annual meetings, regional and training events.

RESOURCES:

Regional federations and CHF Canada offer bursaries and incentives for attending various professional development opportunities.

TIPS:

- Offer information about sector employment opportunities and post-secondary education opportunities to diversity scholarship program winners.
- Encourage interaction between those currently employed in the sector, diversity scholarship winners and interested young members to secure interest in a career in co-op housing.
- Post co-op job opportunities or professional development/educational opportunities on sector web sites and in high traffic areas in co-ops.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Track number of participants taking part in professional development opportunities including the Co-operative Management Conference, regional events and online learning.

RAISING AWARENESS AND BUILDING CAPACITY

Intergenerational learning:

Sector training, education and engagement about young member involvement

Result: Intergenerational learning and support

Co-ops rely on their members to be actively engaged in governance. They need to foster and support processes that ensure the co-op plans for leadership renewal and succession.

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Offer members the opportunity to take part in training and education so that experienced members can become more effective mentors.
- ✓ Members should also be given informal opportunities to discuss their experiences with young member engagement and mentoring. The more co-ops see and experience young members taking active roles in governance and management, the more they will deliver that message to other members, and other co-ops.
- ✓ Incorporate youth-positive messages in all communication that begin with the assumption that young people are important to the co-op movement because they make valuable contributions and they are needed in co-op leadership.

RESOURCES:

Intergenerational workshops at annual meetings and regional events. Online resources on becoming an effective “Adult Ally” (see example www.engagementcentre.ca/files/alliesFINAL_e_web.pdf) and the Be the One video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7xO1a9lZDw).

TIPS:

Encourage members to try out some of the techniques that can help to balance interactions with young people, for example:

- Listen to young people and ask them for feedback.
- Explain decision-making processes so that young people can understand the full picture.
- Ask questions that encourage young people to raise issues that are important to them and allow them to answer without imposing your ideas first.
- Ask clarifying and filtering questions to challenge young people to think through ideas and assess feasibility.

MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Track number of members attending workshops aimed at leadership renewal, succession planning and emerging leader networking.
- Track number of members that are actively mentoring younger members (e.g. Add the question, “Do you mentor?” into the workshop).
- Use reflection tools to assess interactions between members (for example <http://tools.engagementsurvey.ca/tools03.php> and http://tools.engagementsurvey.ca/mod_leadership_paper.php).
- Encourage co-ops to seek feedback from young board members about how they are included and respected in their co-op. Encourage members to informally seek feedback from young people about their experience of working together.

EXISTING RESOURCES

Regional federations, CHF Canada and other co-op sector organizations have already developed a number of tools that can help co-ops engage youth. Below is a short list of some that can help.

PROGRAMS

Diversity Scholarship Program Resources (CHFT)
www.chft.coop/scholarships

ONLINE TRAINING

Board Basics Online (CHF Canada)
www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/onlinelearning.asp

The Co-op Difference: Online Training in Co-op Housing Management (CHF Canada)
www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/onlinelearning.asp

CURRICULA

All4Each Curriculum (Ontario Co-op Association)
www.ontario.coop/programs_services/lifelong_coop_learning/all_4_each_coops_in_the_classroom

TOOLS

2020 Compass (CHF Canada)
www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/2020compass.asp

Be the One Video (CHF Canada)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7xO1a9IZDw

AHP Member Selection Overview (CHF Canada)
www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pdf/ResourceDocs/ahp-resources/AHP-member-selection-overview.pdf

Group Building Activities and Other Resources (SEVEC)
www.sevec.ca/wp-content/themes/sevec/PDFs/Guides-Team-Building%20Activities.pdf

What is a housing co-op? (CHF Canada)
www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/about_1.asp

EVENTS / WORKSHOPS

Emerging leader networking session (CHF Canada)
www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/res_agmworkshops.asp

Think Young Workshop (CHF Canada)
www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/res_agmworkshops.asp

Welcoming and Orienting New Members Workshop (CHF Canada)
www.chfcanda.coop/eng/pages2007/res_agmworkshops.asp

EVALUATION TOOLS

Surveys and Tools for Evaluating Youth Programs and Events (The Students Commission)
<http://tools.engagementsurvey.ca/index.php>

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