

Formalizing the proposal and voting process

Context / Problem

Our grocery cooperative values democratic governance and inclusive participation. However, our current voting process lacks standardization, which can lead to inconsistent implementation, unclear timelines, and reduced transparency. Specific challenges we have experienced or aim to avoid include:

- Limited clarity on when proposals should be introduced and how they move forward to a vote
- Insufficient time for members to review and reflect before being asked to vote
- Uneven opportunities to propose alternative or amended options
- Gaps in participation, especially from members who miss email links or meeting updates
- Lack of a feedback loop to improve the voting process over time

To address these concerns, this proposal introduces a structured, predictable, and inclusive voting process to guide future decisions.

Summary

- Proposals must be published on the wiki in advance of discussions.
- Time will be dedicated at the Sunday meeting to discuss the proposal. In addition, discussions can (and should) occur via the other communication methods used by the cooperative (e.g., email listserv, WhatsApp).
- Ranked choice voting is used by default.
- OpaVote is used for secure, one-member-one-vote elections.
- Ballots must go out within 24 hours or wait until the next meeting.
- A minimum five-day voting window.
- Final call for votes and results shared at the next Sunday meeting.
- Final results must meet a threshold of "quorum", defined as the winning option receiving a simple majority of the active members.
- Feedback is collected after each vote for process improvement.

Detailed Standard Voting Process

1. Eligibility

- Before moving onto the next step, reflect on whether your proposal is solvable in a committee or working group.
- A non-exhaustive list of what should not be solvable within a committee or working group includes proposals that would increase costs to members, use the cooperative's funds, or make changes to the membership agreement.

2. Proposal Development

- Formally draft your proposal and get feedback on it by putting it on the agenda of an in-person Sunday meeting. It is recommended to get feedback from the cooperative beforehand, e.g., via the WhatsApp group, email listserv, or informally at a previous Sunday meeting (preferably a combination of these channels).

3. Proposal Refinement

- Based on feedback from the group, refine the proposal, especially if there are members flatly opposed to the proposal. Capture these perspectives and nuances into the proposal, which may appear as alternative options within the proposal.

4. Formal Submission

- To be considered for a vote, proposals must be posted on the cooperative's wiki ahead of a Sunday meeting.
- That Sunday meeting will include:
 - Presentation of the refined proposal
 - One final group discussion on pros and cons of the proposals and each option
 - One final time for adding amendments or alternatives

5. Ballot Creation

- OpaVote is used for all ballots unless a different tool is specified.
- Ballots go out the evening of the Sunday meeting (ideally) and no later than 24 hours after the end of the Sunday meeting at which the formal submission was made. If not possible, voting is postponed to the next meeting.
- Each ballot includes all viable options using ranked choice voting.

6. Voting

- Ballot is open for at least five (5) calendar days.
- Final call for votes occurs at the next Sunday meeting.
- Those who missed the email can vote live during the meeting.

7. Result Sharing and Feedback

- OpaVote calculates results automatically.

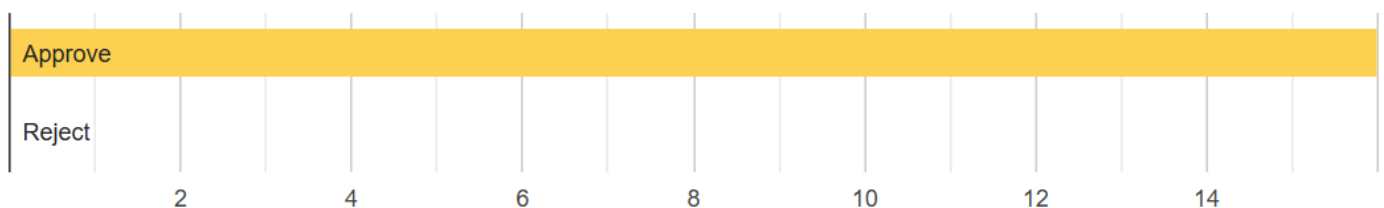
- Results are shared at the Sunday meeting immediately after voting closes.
- For the results to be valid/implemented, the winning option must receive a majority (i.e., more than 50%) of the member list in support.
 - Example: The number of active members is 16, and 13 members vote. A majority of 16 is 9. However, there is not an option that received more than 8 votes due to empty ballots and/or enough members only ranking some but not all options.
 - Note: In cases where the number of active members is odd, majority counts are the first whole number above the 50% fraction. For example, for an active membership of 21, 50% is 10.5, so 11 people voting in the affirmative is majority.
- Brief discussion to:
 - Acknowledge results
 - Plan next steps
 - Collect feedback on process effectiveness

Implementation Notes

- Member emails must be kept up to date for OpaVote.
- Voting coordinators may be identified to ensure timely execution.
- All final outcomes and voting summaries will be added to the wiki.
- A feedback form or informal reflection will be used after each vote.

Results

- Of the 19 active voting members, 16 cast ballots (of which 0 were empty ballots).
- There were two options (Approve and Reject).
- All 16 ballots voted in favor to approve the proposal.



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