



Five Year Strategic Plan 2010-2015

Mission Statement

Our mission, as a natural and organic foods consumer cooperative, is to provide the residents of Isla Vista and neighboring communities of Santa Barbara County with reasonably priced foods, products and services that promote a healthier lifestyle and environment. The Isla Vista Food Cooperative is an economic alternative founded on cooperative business principles and values that are practiced in our operations as well as through our governance policies.

Vision Statement

We envision a community engaged in the cooperative principles and values of social, economic, and environmental responsibility. The Isla Vista Food Cooperative shall continue to be a hub of this cooperative community, empowering its members by providing them with products, services, and information to sustain it. We will give preference to locally owned and sustainable businesses to promote a health local economy. The Co-op's financial success will allow us to provide our employees with a fair wage and benefits. In following our social and economic ideals, we will do outreach projects in the community. Our Co-op shall network with organizations that are in alignment with our goals and ethics. We envision a thriving cooperative community that by practicing the values of honesty, openness, and caring for others, assists other communities in establishing their cooperative identity.

The Seven Cooperative Principles

The Isla Vista Food Cooperative believes in the values contained in the Cooperative Principles- mutual self-help, self-responsibility, democratic control, equality of opportunity, equity, honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others. The Isla Vista Food Co-op is guided by the Seven Cooperative Principles that put these values into practice and ensure the competitive advantage of cooperative enterprise.

- 1. Voluntary and Open Membership**
Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.
- 2. Democratic Member Control**
Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members who actively participate in setting policy and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.
- 3. Member Economic Participation**
Members contribute equitably to and democratically control the capital of the cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative (possibly setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible); distributing to members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
- 4. Autonomy and Independence**
Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with or raise capital from other organizations, including governments or external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.
- 5. Education, Training and Information**
Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of cooperation.
- 6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives**
Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.
- 7. Concern for the Community**
While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

Strategic Initiatives

Member Relations

We recognize that our members and shoppers are our best ambassadors. We shall encourage members to outreach to the community and we shall provide incentives to do that outreach.

Objective

- Broadening our membership program invites members and potential members to step into the role of ownership, increasing member participation in decision-making and volunteer work.

Goals

- Utilize co-op website, suggestion box, and newsletter to encourage member involvement and increase membership.
- Hold events for members, such as Member Appreciation sales and informal potlucks.
- Maintain a Board of Directors information board to facilitate Board-Member relations.
- Engage members at annual Membership Meeting.

Educational Development

The Isla Vista Food Co-op understands the importance of providing up-to-date information about sustainable living options. The Co-op will educate its member-owners, staff, students and the community about the Co-op's mission.

Objective

- Development of an education program to increase the community's awareness of environmental issues, food politics, nutrition, and cooperative business principles, which imparts the knowledge necessary to actively involve and inspire those who wish to participate in the Co-op.

Goals

- Provide orientation pamphlets to newly joined members.
- Provide educational materials for member-owners through handouts and the Co-op website.
- Provide an orientation and training for new board directors and officers.
- Network with local organizations to present information outlined in our objective.
- The Co-op shall maintain interactions with local housing cooperatives and local businesses.

Concern for the Community

The Isla Vista Food Co-op, respecting that it is a member-owned organization, will actively participate in the community, having a positive influence through example, outreach, and participation.

Objectives

- Support local businesses and organizations, participate in community events, and develop outreach programs.
- Encourage the community to practice the ideals of environmental sustainability.
- Serve as a center for cooperative development.
- Support work towards peace within the store, locally, nationally and globally.

Goals

- Maintain a relationship with Twin Pines, a cooperative non-profit organization, in order to return donations from member-owners to local community non-profit organizations that are in alignment with the Isla Vista Food Co-op's mission.
- Provide information to the community about organizations and individuals affiliated with the cooperative movement.
- Practice, encourage, and be proactive towards the ideals of environmental sustainability through recycling, composting, energy and water conservation, and promoting the use of non-toxic, biodegradable substances.
- Maintain involvement in the re-visioning process of the Isla Vista Master Plan.

Governance

The Board of Directors, operating under California Cooperative Law, governs the Isla Vista Food Co-op as representatives of the membership body, and as such is accountable to them. The Board will provide overall direction for the Co-op by defining objectives, policies and goals.

Objective

The Board of Directors shall meet regularly and board members will sit on a committee or otherwise volunteer in the Co-op.

Goals

- The Board will maintain an annual Board calendar, conduct General Manager and Board evaluations, and oversee elections and appointments according to bylaws. The Board President will work with the General Manger in preparing agendas and board packets.
- The Board will implement outreach programs, encourage active member participation, regularly evaluate membership benefits and services, and assist with advertising.
- The Board will explore ways to meet the Co-op's long-range financial goals, suggest financial benchmarks, and assist the General Manager with the annual budget.
- The Board will recruit and nominate board and committee member candidates, supervise and coordinate training and development of board leadership, and develop Board training materials.
- Temporary committees will be formed to meet ongoing co-op needs.

Financial Stability

The Co-op shall maintain operations, a sales growth plan and a capital base to sustain our financial security in order to achieve our objectives. The Board shall provide oversight on expenses and budgeting, and has a fiduciary responsibility to protect the members' assets.

Goals

- Continue associations with other cooperatives and organizations such as the National Cooperative Grocers' Association to enhance our buying power, and participate in regional and national cooperative programs.
- Employ a skilled staff that has the expertise and leadership to productively manage the operations and finances of the store. Maintain a wage and benefit program that compensates employees commensurate with their skills and responsibilities.
- Regularly evaluate the member-owner equity program for effectiveness.