

CO-OP BOARD DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Our Co-op is different. We are part of a movement that does business in a better way, in that our focus is on our members and the communities where we do business.

At the heart of our Society is democracy and valuing the diversity which being a member-owned organisation brings.

POLICY

This sets out our approach to diversity and inclusion on our Co-op Board. It should be read in conjunction with our Board Composition Charter (Charter) which outlines the skills and knowledge our Board needs to ensure our business continues to thrive. The policy in relation to Co-op colleagues is covered by the Our Commitment to Racial Equality and Inclusion.

The Board recognises the importance of an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and creates a board that is representative of its Membership now and in the future and which promotes diversity of thought as well as bringing an appropriate mix of skills and experience.

Diversity is key in ensuring we have the right talent, contribution and commitment to achieve our aims, make high quality deliberations and decisions, as well as effective engagement with Members and other key stakeholders. We believe embracing diversity will give us a commercial advantage as well as being the right thing to do.

We will treat each of our fellow Directors as individuals, allowing them to be themselves regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race or ethnicity, religion or religious belief, culture, marital and civil partnership status, age, educational background, physical and mental ability, political opinion or physical appearance.

The Board recognises that by embracing inclusion and diversity, it will:

- i. help the Board represent the views of our changing and growing Membership;
- ii. bring a broad range of skills, knowledge, thoughts and experience to the Board;
- iii. support good governance through challenge and discussion from a diverse range of viewpoints;
- iv. uphold the Co-operative Values and Principles of honesty, openness, equality and equity; and
- v. uphold the highest standards of good governance and board composition.

GOALS

Co-op Board

While we believe diversity goes beyond gender and ethnicity, we know this has rightly been a key area of focus over recent years.

As at July 2021 our Board comprises:

- Men: (7) 58%
- Women: (5) 42%
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) (4) 33%

Our aim has been to at least maintain the 2017 level of diversity on the Board (when we had 33% women and 16% BAME), having regard to the relevant characteristics as defined in the Charter, including gender and ethnic diversity, so that it is representative of its changing membership and reflects society at large, but to do better than that if possible. We will strive to ensure an appropriate balance and diversity, as well as skills requirements, in line with our Rules.

These Goals will be achieved by:

- In the process for identifying candidates for appointment to the Board, the Nominations Committee and the Member Nominated Director Joint Selection and Approvals Committee (MNDJC) will select from a diverse pool of candidates in the broadest sense
- Appointments and succession plans will be based on merit and objective criteria and will promote diversity of gender, social and ethnic backgrounds, cognitive and personal strengths.
- Taking into account the threshold requirements contained within the Rules and the Charter.
- Monitoring the composition of the Board and those of its key subsidiaries and the diversity of all candidates standing for elections in the MND process.
- Regularly reviewing Board policies and practices to ensure they are supportive of all members and do not create barriers to participation.
- Considering diversity when making all Independent Non-Executive Director appointments including gender, ethnicity and age (Board appointments will continue to be based on merit and candidates will be considered against objective criteria).
- Challenging management to ensure the management population can support the unique and diverse needs of our customers and communities.
- Setting a culture that is values driven and inclusive.
- Through Board effectiveness evaluation programmes, the Board will ensure that there is the balance of skills and knowledge needed to run a cooperative business of the scale and complexity of our Co-op.
- Only engaging executive search firms who have signed up to the voluntary Code of Conduct on gender diversity and best practice (the Board supports the 9 principles of the Executive Search Firms Voluntary Code of Conduct).
- Undertaking appropriate training to support the delivery of this policy.
- Making reference to this policy and any targets set in the annual report.
- A separate section of the annual report to describe the work of the Nomination Committee, including the process it has used in relation to board appointments, its approach to succession planning and how both support developing a diverse pipeline. This section will include:
 - a description of the Board's policy on diversity, including gender and ethnicity
 - any measurable objectives that it has set for implementing the policy, and progress on achieving the objectives.
 - an explanation given if neither an external search consultancy nor open advertising has been used in the appointment of a Chair or a non-executive director.

- the gender balance of those in the senior management and their direct reports.
- Reviewing at least annually this policy against Our Commitment to Racial Equality and Inclusion to ensure alignment in approach.

Approved by the Co-op Board on 8 September 2021