

RUN

for the **willy street co-op**

Board of Directors

2026 Candidate Application Packet

Deadline for applications: August 27th at 11:59 p.m.

willy street co●op

Dear Reader,

Thank you for your interest in running for the Willy Street Co-op Board of Directors.

Willy Street Co-op is a cornerstone of our vibrant community, and the Board of Directors plays a critical role in supporting the continued success and long-term health of the Co-op. The Board is made up of nine members who are democratically elected by Owners. All Board members, including any elected employees, represent the Ownership as a whole rather than any specific group or subset of Owners.

The Board's work is primarily focused on the vision and long-term viability of the Co-op. We represent all Owners in setting standards for the Co-op's performance and use the Policy Governance Model to oversee the organization. This model emphasizes values, vision, accountability, and the empowerment of both staff and the Board.

We are seeking Board candidates from diverse backgrounds for this year's three open seats. Please read the following application packet carefully, and feel free to let us know what questions you have by emailing the Board Development Committee at BoardCandidates@willystreet.coop.

Thanks again for your interest in serving your Willy Street Co-op.

Yours in cooperation,
Willy Street Co-op Board of Directors

Board Duties and Governance Responsibilities

Mission, Strategy, and Policy

Each Board member participates in the Board's work to:

- Determine the Co-op's mission and strategic direction through ongoing planning activities.
- Adopt policies that further the Co-op's mission and goals.
- Periodically review Board policies to ensure they remain relevant to the Co-op's evolving needs.
- Evaluate how well the Co-op's services and activities support its mission.

Financial Oversight and Organizational Stability

Each Board member helps the Board fulfill its responsibility to:

- Maintain the financial stability of the organization while supporting long-term growth.
- Review and approve the Co-op's annual budget.
- Assess the Co-op's financial performance at least four times per year.
- Annually monitor internal controls and ensure a summary of the review is shared with the full Board.
- Periodically assess the need for insurance coverage related to the Co-op's activities.

General Manager Oversight and Board Development

Each Board member helps the Board fulfill its responsibility to:

- Hire, set compensation for, and annually evaluate the General Manager (GM) using mutually established goals.
- Support the GM, as appropriate, in advancing the Co-op's mission and goals.
- Recruit Board candidates and support the orientation of new Board members.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a person is in a position to derive personal benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity. Conflicts of interest may arise when a Board member:

- Has an affiliation with an organization that competes with the Co-op.
- Has an affiliation with an organization or individual that may receive a financial benefit from doing business with the Co-op.
- Has an affiliation, membership, or leadership role with the local Willy Street Co-op union.
- Has a family or close personal relationship with a current Board member.

Board members with conflicts of interest may be asked to recuse themselves from making decisions related to disclosed conflicts.

Qualifications and Expectations

Minimum Qualifications

- Be an Owner of the Co-op in good standing¹.
- Be willing and able to serve the full length of the Board term, typically three years.
- Be willing and able to meet the time commitment required for Board service.
- Be willing to work closely and cooperatively with other Board members.
- Support the Co-op's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Expectations

- Comply with the Board's Code of Conduct.
- Maintain confidentiality of Board matters, as required.
- Attend Board meetings regularly, 8-10 times per year.
- Attend the annual Board retreat and the Annual Meeting.
- Commit to completing the full term for which they are elected.
- Serve on at least one Board or General Manager committee.
- Stay informed and engaged by checking their Co-op email at least twice per week.
- Participate in Board communication with Owners by writing at least two newsletter articles for the Board Report section of the *Reader*, attending at least two community events to represent Willy Street Co-op, or doing one of each annually.
- Be familiar with Google apps, including Gmail, Google Meet, and Drive, or be willing to learn the technology needed for Board service.

Helpful Skills, Experience, and Community Connection

- Active involvement in the local community.
- Effective communication skills.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Experience making decisions in a group setting.
- Willingness to listen to and represent a broad range of Owner perspectives.

¹ Per the Co-op Bylaws, an Owner in good standing must have made at least one recent purchase, be current in their equity payments, and have no incidents of inappropriate behavior on Co-op property. The Co-op offers discounts and support on Ownerships to those for whom the cost of membership creates a financial barrier, and we encourage anyone interested in Ownership or our governance work to ask about these options. To be eligible for Board candidacy, Owners should be in good standing and hold a current individual or household account at the time applications are submitted and reviewed. No business account numbers will be eligible. Candidates can be a primary or secondary named on a household account, but only one candidate is allowed per Owner number. If a Board member or candidate should be removed as a secondary Owner on their account, they must contact Willy Street Co-op administrators immediately to inform them of their new account number. Per the Co-op Bylaws, if a Board member fails to maintain good standing, terminates their Ownership, or if their secondary account member status should be removed prior to creating a new account, their Board membership will automatically be terminated.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Board of Directors, and what does it do?

The Board of Directors is the elected body that represents the Co-op's Owners. The Board sets governance policies for the General Manager (GM), who manages Co-op staff and day-to-day operations in accordance with those policies. The Board also helps guide the Co-op's long-term direction, monitors organizational performance, and ensures the Co-op remains accountable to its mission, values, and Owners. Willy Street Co-op Board members typically serve three-year terms and attend an average of 8 to 10 meetings per year.

I am a staff member, and I would like to run for the Board. What do I need to know?

The Co-op is a consumer cooperative, not a worker cooperative. However, staff who are Owners of the Co-op are eligible to run for the Board of Directors. The Co-op's Bylaws allow up to two employees to serve as Board members at one time (Section 5.2). All Board members have a duty of loyalty to the Co-op and a fiduciary responsibility to act in the Co-op's best interests. These responsibilities apply equally to all Board members, including employee Board members. Employee Board members do not represent employees specifically; like all other Board members, they represent the Ownership as a whole.

Board members who are also employees are subject to unique conflicts of interest. Examples of unique conflicts of interest that may arise are when a Board member:

- Is an employee and decisions are being made pertaining to their financial well-being.
- Is an employee who directly (or indirectly) reports to the GM, and evaluates their performance.
- Is a bargaining unit employee represented by the union, and decisions are being made related to finances or the GM's performance.

How much time is required by Board members?

The Board typically meets 8 to 10 times per year, with meetings lasting 2 to 3 hours. Meetings may be held in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format, and some meetings may run longer than scheduled. The Board reviews its annual meeting calendar each year, generally after new Board members are seated. Board members should expect to commit an average of 7 to 10 hours per month to Co-op business. In addition to regular meetings, this may include preparing for meetings, serving on committees, working on outside projects or proposals, writing newsletter articles, and/or attending community events. Board retreats are held once a year, and Board members are encouraged to attend national or regional co-op conferences when applicable.

What is the compensation for serving?

The primary reward for serving on the Board is the satisfaction that comes from doing useful and cooperative work. Board members receive a monthly stipend of \$260. The Board Chair and Vice Chair receive monthly stipends of \$660 and \$435, respectively. Payment is administered through the Co-op's online HR payroll system. In addition, all Board members receive a 15% discount on Co-op purchases. The Board provides special training for new Board members and ongoing training for all Board members. Reimbursement is also provided for child care expenses while attending Board meetings, as well as for printing Board materials.

I've decided to run, now what?

To prepare for running and to help Owners make an informed decision on who they will vote to represent them, we ask that you complete the Board candidate activities listed below.

1. Be an Owner in good standing

Candidates must be Owners of the Co-op in good standing when they apply. Applications without a valid Owner number in good standing will not be considered. Candidates may resubmit once this requirement is met, but all materials must be received by the deadline.

2. Attend a Board Information Session or Board Meeting

Candidates must complete one of the following before the application deadline:

- a. Attend a Board Information Session with current Board members; or
- b. Attend at least one Board meeting before the application deadline.

Board Information Sessions

- a. Board Information Sessions are one-hour opportunities to meet with experienced Board members and support staff, learn more about Board service, and ask questions.

Information sessions will be scheduled by request. To request a session, please email BoardCandidates@willystreet.coop with three dates and times you are available. Requests should be submitted no later than August 13, 2026.

Sessions may be held virtually or in person at the Willy Street Co-op Central Office, 1457 E. Washington Ave., Madison.

Board Meetings

- b. Board meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. and may be attended virtually or in person. In-person meetings are held at the Willy Street Co-op Central Office, 1457 E. Washington Ave., Madison.

To receive the virtual meeting invitation, please email BoardCandidates@willystreet.coop at least 72 hours in advance.

- **Wednesday, June 24, 2026**
- **Wednesday, August 26, 2026**

(Please note, any Board member who is currently serving is exempt from this requirement. Owners will be asked to disclose their Owner numbers at or before the information sessions. Requests for alternate Board Information Sessions will not be considered if received after August 13.)

3. Submit Candidate Materials

Please visit willystreet.coop/run-for-board to submit your candidate materials no later than Thursday, August 27, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. CST. If you have questions or need support submitting materials, contact BoardCandidates@willystreet.coop.

The form will ask you to provide the following information and materials:

- a. Candidate name and valid Owner number.
- b. A clear, high-resolution headshot. The file size should be at least 1 MB so the image prints clearly in our newsletter. A print photo may also be submitted, but we cannot guarantee the return of the photo.
- c. In 250 characters (approximately 50 words) or fewer, summarize why Owners should choose you to represent them. This statement will be the first thing readers see in your candidate profile.
- d. Answers to the following questions, with a maximum of 750 characters (approximately 150 words) per answer. Please provide three separate answers rather than one long answer that addresses all three questions.
 1. Why are you interested in running for the Willy Street Co-op Board of Directors?
 2. How have you been active in our local community?
 3. How will your relevant skills and experiences further the mission and the vision of the Co-op? (See page 7 for the Willy Street Co-op Mission and Vision statements.)

These materials will be published in the October *Reader* and/or in other media used to promote the election. Your Owner number will be used only to confirm eligibility and will not be shared publicly.

4. Attend the Annual Meeting (Optional, but strongly recommended)

Attend the Annual Meeting on October 6. Please come prepared to introduce yourself and to make a brief statement to Owners at the meeting.

- ✓ 6:00 p.m. CST on Tuesday, October 6

When will the election be held?

The polls will be open October 1–October 21, 2026. Online and vote-by-phone ballots will be due at 11:59 p.m. Monday, October 19, and all paper ballots must be received by 6:00 p.m. October 21, 2026, when the Board holds its Special Meeting to receive a tally of the votes. Any ballots received after 6:00 p.m. will not be considered valid entries, and will not be counted.

Mission, Vision, Ends, and Cooperative Principles

Mission: Cultivate and empower community, customers, employees, and suppliers through cooperative principles and practices.

Vision: Willy Street Co-op is a local community partner that nourishes a sustainable, accessible, and equitable food system where everyone can participate.

Ends: Willy Street Co-op will be at the forefront of a cooperative and just society that:

- has a robust local economy and food system built around equitable relationships;
- nourishes and enriches our community and environment; and
- has a culture of respect, generosity, and authenticity.

Cooperative Principles

1. **Voluntary Open Ownership:** Open to all without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination. You may shop, you may join, and you may leave the Co-op at any time.
2. **Democratic Owner Control:** One Owner, one vote. Your voice will be heard.
3. **Owner Economic Participation:** Owners contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the cooperative's capital. The economic benefits of a cooperative operation are returned to the Owners, reinvested in the Co-op, or used to provide Owner services. You control the capital.
4. **Autonomy and Independence:** Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their Owners. Together, you are autonomous.
5. **Education, Training, and Information:** Cooperatives provide education and training for Owners so they can contribute effectively to their cooperatives' development. They inform the general public about the nature and benefits of cooperation. You can develop yourself into the consumer you want to be.
6. **Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** Cooperatives serve their Owners most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, regional, national, and international structures. You are more successful when you cooperate with others who know how to cooperate.
7. **Concern for the Community:** While focusing on Owner needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their Owners. You can do something for the community even as you keep succeeding.
8. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Cooperatives strive to incorporate diversity, perform equitably, and ensure inclusion at all levels of their organizations to serve members better, show Owners they are valued, and ensure Owners receive equitable service.

Policy Governance

The Willy Street Co-op Board uses the Policy Governance™ model to maintain accountability and to focus our vision regarding the “big picture.” The model allows our Board to clearly define its expectations of the GM, monitor progress toward achieving the expectations, and then verify that the expectations were met. This process provides us with the information we need to fulfill our fiduciary duties, ensure our Owners and stakeholders are well-served, and accomplish our organizational purpose.

Policies are our primary vehicle for reporting accountability, and we regularly monitor compliance. We have four general categories of policies that express our expectations and the acceptable means to meet them:

- A. **Ends Policies** broadly state the desired organizational outcomes and ongoing priorities of what should be achieved and for whom.
- B. **Executive Limitations Policies** delineate job expectations and acceptable boundaries within which the General Manager can act.
- C. **Board Process Policies** describe the Board’s function, process, and products.
- D. **Board-Management Relationship Policies** describe how the Board delegates to our sole employee, the General Manager.

We start crafting policies using broad statements regarding allowable and prohibited behavior, then specify further as needed. We limit the level of detail in our written policies to that which is required for the Board to remain accountable, then delegate the means to achieve compliance to the General Manager. This approach allows for maximum flexibility and creativity within the established boundaries.

The Policy Governance model enables the Board to:

- Focus leadership on the future and larger issues while allowing others to decide on smaller issues and day-to-day operations.
- Delegate genuine authority to others while remaining accountable.
- Assess compliance with policy and regularly evaluate performance.
- Clearly articulate expectations for the Board, GM, and committees.

The Board of Directors exists for the sole purpose of ensuring, on behalf of our Owners, that the organization performs as it should. We must constantly evaluate our purpose—the impact we want to create for Owners, our community, and the broader world—that justifies our existence. This brings us to the most important question: What difference does having this Co-op in the world make to you?

Policy Governance was developed by John Carver; the term is registered and protected. Carver’s website address is www.carvergovernance.com.

**Policy Governance information is adapted from Eastside Food Co-op. Used with their permission.*

Thank you!

Thank you for considering running for the Board of Directors of your Willy Street Co-op! Having a diverse array of qualified candidates helps to shape the strategic direction of the Co-op and ensures our continued success.

Additional information about Board service may be obtained by contacting some of the Board members at BoardCandidates@willystreet.coop. This may provide a more personal perspective on Board service. Board meetings are open to all Owners, and you can find our meeting schedule in the *Reader* and on our website at www.willystreet.coop/events. Finally, approved Board meeting minutes are posted in the Owner Resources Areas at our stores.

