

If You're Writing a Paper About the Co-op or a Related Topic, please follow these instructions:

The Co-op is happy to assist students working on papers, but it must always be taken into consideration that we also are running a busy store.

Please email our education & outreach director at least 2 weeks prior to your paper being due, and schedule a meeting that allows you ample time to collect your information.

Please do not try and schedule meetings at the last minute, or come into the Co-op unannounced, as this will greatly deter from our ability to give you the personal attention and time that your paper deserves.

Contact Melissa at marketing@islavistafood.coop for more information or to schedule a meeting.

The following information should be reviewed prior to scheduling a meeting, as it may answer some of the more basic questions that you have.

General Info About the Co-op

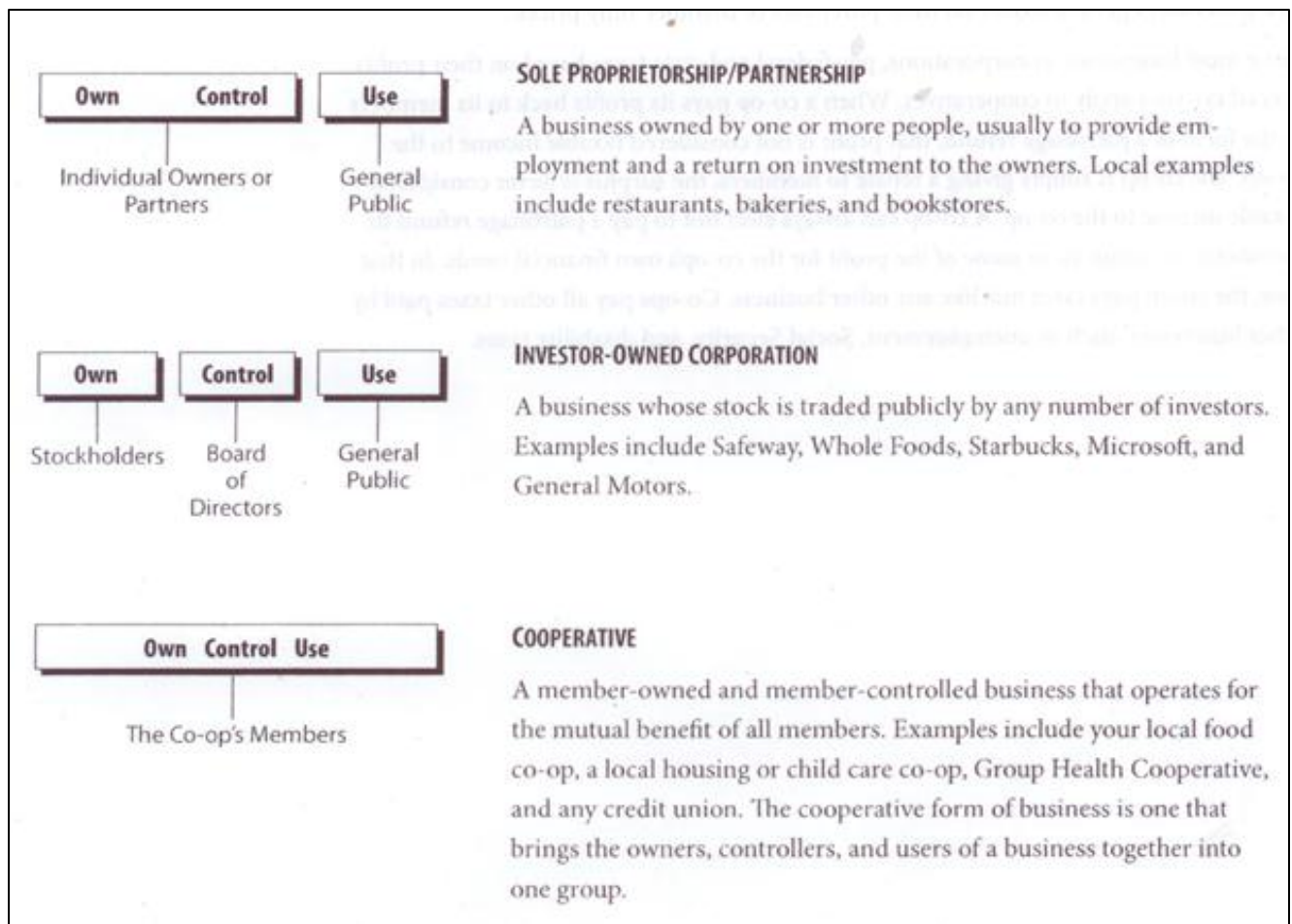
What is a Co-op?

A cooperative is a business. It is a business owned and controlled voluntarily by the people who use it—its members. A co-op is operated for the benefit of its member-owners, who have rights from and responsibilities to their cooperative. To distinguish a Co-op from other organizations, ask the following questions:

1. Is the organization a business? A co-op is a business, usually incorporated (the IVFC is incorporated), that sells goods and services. It is not a charitable organization or a social service agency. We like to consider the IVFC a resource-driven (rather than profit-driven) business. Decisions that we make are often not with the goal of how much money we can generate, but rather how much more we can offer to our community in terms of our ability to be a resource.
2. Who benefits from the Co-op's existence? A co-op exists primarily for the benefit of its members. The Isla Vista Food Co-op is open to the public, so anyone in the community can benefit from the cooperative (although there are benefits that are reserved for owners only, as well).
3. Who controls the business? In a cooperative, members democratically control the direction of the business. In most co-ops, including the IVFC, each member gets one vote. Members elect a board of directors to monitor the business, set goals, and hire the General Manager (who operates their business). Ultimately, the board is accountable to the members for its decisions. The IVFC Board of Directors meetings are open for all Co-op Owners to attend.

4. What motivates the business owners? In private or stockholder-owned businesses, individuals invest to earn a financial return. In a co-op, individuals are motivated by a shared need for certain products or services. By joining together, members gain access to benefits not available through individual effort. In other words, in a co-op, members are motivated to become co-owners of the business primarily so that their mutual needs can be met.

Like any business, a co-op provides goods and services to its customers. From its physical appearance and operations, a co-op may seem no different from any other business. However, the differences between co-ops and other businesses go beyond appearance. The real differences lie in who owns, controls, and uses the business – and in who benefits from the business’s services and accomplishments.



In a Co-op Nutshell:

Visionary social ideals + the economic reality of running a business = the cooperative way of doing business!

The Isla Vista Food Co-op's purpose as a consumer co-op is to be a trusted source of natural & organic products and a reliable source for consumer information-driven not by profit, but by motivation for community autonomy, mutual aid, & environmental justice.

Our Mission and Vision Statements

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 operating as well as through our governance policies.

Our produce department exists to provide our community with locally grown and organic food options as a means of promoting physical health, environmental sustainability, community prosperity, and local autonomy. Our predominately local and in-season produce department provides critical financial support to farmers who are members of the Santa Barbara community. The result is that we get the freshest and most delicious produce available, and we help break a link in the corporate food chain.

Our vision is a community engaged in the cooperative principles and values of social, economic, and environmental responsibility. The Isla Vista Food Cooperative will be the hub of this cooperative community, empowering its members by providing them with products, services, and information to sustain it. Our Co-op will network with organizations that are in alignment with our goals and ethics. It will succeed financially allowing is to provide our employees with a fair wage and benefits, as well as providing the means for outreach projects to the community defining our social and economic ideals. We envision a thriving cooperative community that by practicing the values of honesty, openness, and caring for others, will assist other communities in establishing their cooperative identity.

A Consolidated Co-op History: A Little Bit of Culture. Written for Shape of Voice, 2008

In February of 1970, the Isla Vista branch of the Bank of America was burned to the ground. This action followed a series of protests at UCSB that underscored the overwhelming discontent of many students regarding bureaucratic and unilateral decisions made by the administration at the University, and ultimately created an alarming sense of disempowerment among some of the student population. The protests and sit-ins that were organized as a response to the issues at hand were discounted amongst the University's administration, and rather than being met with respect and dignity, the protesters were met with police officers and tear gas. Disenchantment and futility were thusly reinterpreted into violence and rioting, and Isla Vista became the location for the war. The Bank of America became a symbol for a population disillusioned by the overarching capitalism and corporatism that seeped into all avenues of existence between the University and the United States of America. And they burned it down. The riots that engulfed Isla Vista into an anarchistic frenzy over the following months saw the streets of the seaside town tainted with the blood of violence and murder, and the death of a community that once was a beacon of hope for the dawning of an Age of Aquarius.

And then there was rebirth.

As leaves fell from the trees in the Autumn of 1970, community members and student activists began to reclaim the streets of Isla Vista. And somewhere, a group of people

decided that the best “F-U” they could give the corporate system was by never buying their food from “the man” again. And thus, the Whole Wheat Buying Club was born.

Isla Vista was divided into 6 cells of operation, broken down geographically by the streets in the town. Every cell had an organizer, who was charged with distributing order guides to each household involved. To become involved, a household merely had to contribute \$5.00 in “equity” to the Buying Club (collateral for supplies and storage), and stay on top of submitting and receiving their order. At the height of the Whole Wheat Buying Club, over 450 households were meeting in Anis q’Oyo Park every Saturday, staggered by the location of their cell, receiving and breaking down 50lb wheels of cheese, hundreds of pounds of potatoes, loaves of bread, all necessary foodstuffs to get their families and friends through another week of living outside the confine of the corporate food chain.

And then, in an ironic turn of events, a local student activist decided that he wanted to start a storefront food co-op in Isla Vista, as an independent study project in the UCSB Sociology Department. Many of the original organizers of the Buying Club found appeasement with the thought of a fully operational store, where people could shop at their leisure rather than in a confined and appointed time, while still supporting a community-owned and operated non-for-profit anti-corporate venture. After capturing a \$13,000 loan from the Legislative Directors of the Associated Students at UCSB, the project was deemed successful, and in January of 1972, the Isla Vista Füd Co-op was open for business.

The supporters of the cellular, guerilla-style of food distribution that the Buying Club appealed to were less inclined to favor the more permanent setup that a fully operational storefront co-op provided, and ran the Buying Club for a while after the Füd Co-op was open for business. Once the success of the Co-op became apparent, and most households had switched their equity into the storefront shop, organizers ultimately decided to dissolve the Buyer’s Club so that more energy could be placed in the day-to-day operations of the Co-op.

36 years later, the IV Food Co-op is one of the last remaining community resources created in the aftermath of the riots of the 1970’s. While the operations within the store have changed as the business has grown, the Co-op remains dedicated to the perseverance of a different way to buy groceries and produce, where the customer is the owner, and will always have a much larger voice than merely the amount of money in their bank account. Whether it’s the Produce Manager receiving a delivery from one of the thirty local farmers the Co-op supports, or community artists organizing shows to be played on the Co-op patio, or even a place where KCSB will take priority over commercial radio any day, there’s something to be said for the little funky Food Co-op that most thought would fade away as the hippies grew up and moved away.

There’s something to be said for what can happen when you decide to start a locally owned and community grown revolution.

Outside Resources About Co-ops

www.cooperativegrocer.coop is the website of the industry magazine for consumer cooperative grocery stores, which includes an index of topics with links to previously

published articles on such diverse issues as governance, education, marketing, and sustainability. This site also includes a directory of Food Co-ops in the U.S., at the following link: <http://www.cooperativegrocer.coop/coops/>

www.coopdirectory.org includes listings of natural food co-ops across the U.S., along with information about the history of Co-ops.

For information about how to start a Co-op, visit the National Cooperative Grocer's Association at www.ncga.coop.

For general information about all types of Co-ops visit the National Cooperative Business Association at www.ncba.coop. Through comprehensive education, co-op development, communications, public policy, member services, and international development programs, NCBA helps co-ops strengthen their businesses so they can better serve their members. It also provides a strong, unified voice on Capitol Hill.

For a more international perspective, check out www.cooponline.coop/about.html This is a UK-based site that provides information about and a directory of the many types of cooperative businesses in Great Britain. The Isla Vista Food Co-op, and in fact the modern cooperative movement as a whole, trace our ancestry back to Rochdale in the U.K., and the original Co-op store in Toad Lane.

Further Related Links

www.usda.gov is the website for the United States Department of Agriculture; this is an excellent starting point to gather information on current issues in agriculture, nutrition, and natural resources.

www.ccof.org is the website for California Certified Organic Farmers. You can find information about their organic certification program and other advocacy issues on this site.

www.caff.org is the website for the Community Alliance with Family Farmers.

www.cornucopia.org is the website for **The Cornucopia Institute**. They are dedicated to the fight for economic justice for the family-scale farming community. Through research, advocacy, and economic development our goal is to empower farmers both politically and through marketplace initiatives.