

COOPERATIVE IDENTITY

HANDOUT

Cooperatives are defined by a **Statement**, a set of seven **Principles**, and a set of ten **Values** - the sum of which is referred to as the “**Cooperative Identity**.” The Cooperative Identity is stewarded by the **International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)**. The ICA was created in 1895 to unite, represent, and serve cooperatives worldwide.



STATEMENT

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and/or cultural needs and/or aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

PRINCIPLES

1. **Voluntary & 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 their policies and making decisions. Members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote).
3. **Member Economic Participation:** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative.
4. **Autonomy & Independence:** Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members.
5. **Education, Training, & 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 about the nature and benefits of cooperation.
6. **Cooperation Among Cooperatives:** Cooperatives both serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working with each other whenever possible.
7. **Concern for Community:** Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

VALUES

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|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| → Self-help | → Equality | → Openness |
| → Self-responsibility | → Equity | → Social-responsibility |
| → Democracy | → Solidarity | → Caring for Others |
| | → Honesty | |

OWN, CONTROL, & BENEFIT

WORKSHEET

Who owns, controls, and benefits from the different models of business and organization most prevalent today? The “profit paradigm” (including “for-profit” and “non-profit” entities) encompasses the vast majority of enterprises in the United States.

	FOR PROFIT	NON PROFIT	COOPERATIVE
Example Organization			
OWN			
CONTROL			
BENEFIT			

Examples of familiar US businesses and organizations:

- **FOR PROFIT:** Amazon, Wal-Mart, Your local bank
- **NON PROFIT:** World Wildlife Foundation, Red Cross, UNICEF
- **MUTUAL:** REI, Ocean Spray, Your local credit union