



Whidbey Island Grown Cooperative Membership Guide

The purpose of this document is to share the vision and values of the Whidbey Island Grown Cooperative, to define membership benefits and expectations, and to provide guidance on cooperative guidelines and practices. The Whidbey Island Grown Cooperative reserves the right to make periodic updates and changes to this document.

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Legal Structure: Multi-stakeholder Cooperative,

Cooperative Board: Kyle Flack, Bell's Farm

Stephen Williams, Foxtail Farm

John Burks, Kettle's Edge Farm

Shannon Bly, Whidbey Island Conservation District

David Bauermeister, NABC

Our Mission

The mission of the WIGC is to support a viable agricultural economy, to increase the production and sales of agricultural products on Whidbey Island and to build a resilient, healthy and sustainable community.

Our Story

Since its inception in 2009, many amazing, dedicated volunteers have contributed to the growth of Whidbey Island Grown. Working with the Northwest Agricultural Business Center (NABC) the founding members launched the organization and created the Whidbey Island Grown logo as a “place based” marketing brand seeking to promote local agriculture on Whidbey Island. Members committed to a set of agricultural practices in order to market their products under the Whidbey Island Grown brand.

As with so many volunteer organizations whose primary stakeholders are small business owners, in this case primarily farmers and ranchers, finding time to devote to developing the brand and supporting the newly created organization faltered, and growth of the organization stalled. In 2017, the brand was relaunched with a vision of expanding the organization membership to include local businesses, such as restaurants, caterers, event planners, B&B's and markets, that use or feature our local agricultural producers' products. Membership categories were created to include: Farms; Dining and Libations; Lodging; Caterers & Venues; Locally Made and Supporters. Members were asked to commit to work collaboratively in support of each other's business. A new mission statement was developed: The Whidbey Island Grown Brand preserves and promotes Whidbey Island as an authentic rural, farm, and culinary destination through taste-driven experiences, products and attractions.

During the next two years membership grew to include over 100 individual businesses and supporters. An annual organizational event, Whidbey Island Grown Week, was created to promote the member businesses and heighten brand awareness. Annual

member networking events were held to provide current and potential members the opportunity to meet and identify possible business relations.

Several members within WIG envisioned the creation of a formal cooperative structured around the creation of a Whidbey Island Food Hub, a buyer's cooperative and a local retail cooperative. Thus, building on the growth and success of the relaunch, in 2020 this group of individuals led the organization to official incorporation as the Whidbey Island Grown Cooperative (WIGC).

Simultaneously with WIGC's incorporation came COVID19. As we all are experiencing, the pandemic and emergency measures have changed event plans, community needs, and even the ways we do business. WIGC is committed to providing services for farmers and producers, small businesses, partners, and the community in order to connect the local food supply with buyers and customers. While our agritourism promotions and events are cancelled for now, we look forward to the time when we can all gather together and share meals, tour farms, and celebrate as a community.

Our Goals

WIGC believes in building a strong, resilient local economy that we can depend on in good times and bad. Resilience begins with agriculture and a viable local food system, but it involves all of us in this island community. Food can connect us all.

WIGC believes that

- Everyone deserves access to fresh, healthy food.
- A strong local food market is essential for food security and resilience in emergencies.
- It will take cooperation from the entire community to build the local food system.
- As a community, we can work together to overcome barriers to buying local.
- Increased market share for local producers and businesses will also increase access to healthy, fresh, nutritious food.
- Local producers can receive a larger share of annual agricultural sales on Whidbey Island.
- Cooperation and aggregation will build a larger market for local producers.
- A productive farm and a healthy environment are complementary goals.
- It's an agricultural producer's responsibility to preserve the health of their soil, water, and land for a viable future for all.

The goals of WIGC are to:

- Build a healthier Island community with more access to fresh, local food
- Reduce obstacles to buying local
- Expand economic opportunities for local producers
- Increase the production, distribution, and consumption of locally produced agricultural and value added product.
- Develop relationships between local farms and customers, including businesses/institutions and retail customers
- Combine marketing, aggregation, distribution, and supply purchasing for member producers.
- Bring down overall costs associated with production agriculture on Whidbey Island to encourage more producers to enter the market.

WIGC will accomplish these goals through the programs listed below, and will continue to improve, expand, and adapt programs in order to best serve our membership, our community, and our goals. Operating guidelines for each program can be found in separate documents.

Programs

Food Hub

WIGC provides marketing, aggregation and distribution of the freshest, seasonal produce, meat, dairy and more, direct from local agriculture producers.

- We're making it convenient for businesses, institutions, and retail customers to buy source-identified, local food directly from local farms with an online marketplace, streamlined payment options and aggregated delivery to pick-up sites or directly to businesses.
- Shared marketing, infrastructure, and purchasing opens up markets for farms to increase sales, reduce costs and waste, and decrease carbon footprint due to coordinated and combined delivery.
- Farms own their product through the supply chain – their production methods are transparent and food is traceable to the farm. With their name connected to every product they sell, farms develop and maintain direct customer relationships, negotiate their own prices and nurture business growth.
- Traveling distance between farm to customer is shortened or removed, freeing up time for producers to be on the farm.

Bulk Buyers Club

WIGC seeks to provide purchasing opportunities for producers to buy supplies at bulk prices.

- Producers can choose the quantity they will purchase, and receive bulk pricing.
- Reduces shipping costs and eliminates meeting delivery minimums.
- Lowering operating costs makes small farms more viable.

Marketing Support

WIGC provides marketing and promotion services to all its members through online marketing channels, networking opportunities, and community events

- Marketing and promotion materials are available to advertise that partners are choosing local.
- Promotion through WIGC media channels
- Partnership opportunities with other members during Whidbey Island Grown Week and other events

Future Programs and Opportunities will be added to the WIGC programs at the discretion of the board.

Membership Guidelines

WIGC is a multi-stake holder cooperative owned by producers buyers, and community supporters. All these stakeholders play an important role in and depend on the local food economy. By combining their interests and efforts into a cooperative, the different stakeholder groups can work together to strengthen the local food economy.

Member Category Definitions:

Producer: Businesses who grow vegetables, meat, and other agricultural products on Whidbey Island.

Buyer: Businesses who may purchase producers' products for resale and/or value-added processing. Buyers commit to purchasing agricultural products locally when possible.

Community Partners: Businesses, organizations, and individuals committed to buying and supporting local and regional agriculture and who support the mission of WIGC.

- Benefits to Producers
 - increased access to markets thru aggregation

- o marketing and promotion services, such as social media support/sharing, and producer profiles
 - o access to relationships that the cooperative creates with marketers, organizations, and wholesale buyers,
 - o inclusion in events cooperative puts on such as WIG Week, and buy local marketing campaigns
 - o lower operational costs thru bulk buying options
 - o fewer deliveries and expanded customer base through the Food Hub
 - o educational opportunities
 - o stronger farmer networks
 - o support in building networks with buyers
- Benefits to Buyers
 - o Easier access to local products through fresh sheet/aggregation/delivery on the Food Hub
 - o Support in accessing and selling local products through promotional materials and marketing from cooperative
 - o Promotional materials showing that you are a supporter of local farms/economy
 - o can ask higher prices for locally grown food
 - o invest in local supply chain
 - o invest in resiliency
 - o Inclusion in events cooperative puts on such as WIG Week and buy local marketing campaigns
- Benefits Community Partner
 - o More local products available in more places
 - o Invest in local supply chain
 - o invest in resiliency
 - o Support sustainability, values, small farms, fresh food
 - o Marketing support and promotional materials to show that you are a supporter of local farms/economy/sustainability
- A cooperative will help to foster a vibrant, strong agricultural community on Whidbey Island

Membership in WIGC is open to producers, buyers, and community partners who meet the guidelines outlined below.

WIGC Membership Standards

Production Standards

While farming practices and animal welfare standards vary over time, all members must commit to at least adhering to widely accepted best practices of environmental health and animal welfare. Practices should be integrous to the health of the environment, animals, and people. Acceptance of specific practices will be determined by the board.

All members will abide by all applicable federal, state and local regulations regarding their business practices, whether they are producers, value-added producers, restaurants, or local businesses.

It is of great importance for food growers and handlers to follow applicable standards of food safety rules, regulations, and practices, such as FSMA (FDA Food Safety Modernization Act).

All member production practice claims MUST be verified/explained fully (For example, the use of the word “natural” or “beyond organic” would need to be defined further). If producers are listed as “organic”, an appropriate certification must be posted and made available to WIGC.

Cooperation and Participation Standards

WIGC and its members believe that by working together, combining buying power, and aggregating product, the local market will grow for all. A strong, sustainable local food economy is good for local farms, local businesses, local community, and local resiliency.

WIGC depends on consistency, honesty, and cooperation from all its members in order to provide competitive, transparent, efficient, and mutually beneficial services.

- Building Relationships - WIGC seeks to enhance and enlarge relationships and networks in our small community. Members are encouraged to use the food hub for aggregation and distribution as it streamlines and makes convenient marketing of products. Members are also encouraged to build relationships with each other that are mutually beneficial.
- Building Markets- competition and choice allows producers to produce better products and consumers to have more options which then creates a stronger market through ethical, honest competition with a spirit of goodwill. “A rising tide lifts all ships.”

- Complaints or accusations of improper production practices or other improper member conduct should be made to WIGC staff and board for resolution and should not be a part of the marketing or social media of any member.
- Ownership - WIGC is owned by its members, who are the decision makers about its operations. The more participation from members, the more effective and productive WIGC will be. WIGC strongly encourages all members to participate in some way in the co-op, the programs, the marketing, and the decisions of WIGC.

Membership Commitments

Members of the WIGC commit to the following:

1. Support local food systems in one or more of the following ways:
 - a. Choose to buy from local agriculture and value-added producers when possible
 - b. Increase purchases from local ag and value-added producers
 - c. Choose to buy from locally owned businesses and restaurants when possible
 - d. Increase purchases from locally owned businesses and restaurants
 - e. Share your commitments and purchasing choices with family, friends, and community and encourage others to do the same
 - f. Support efforts within the community, the island, the region, and the state to strengthen local food systems
 - g. Work to increase access to local food for all in our communities
 - h. Learn and/or educate others about growing food, seasonal eating, and the benefits of eating local
2. Protect the environment on our island in one or more of the following ways:
 - a. Reduce use of pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals
 - b. Invest in, encourage, and educate about alternative farm and garden practices that use fewer chemicals, such as Integrated Pest Management, and responsible pasture management
 - c. Support and/or practice good soil management to keep fecal bacteria and excess nutrients out of our waterways
 - d. Support and/or practice responsible animal husbandry
3. Participate in the Co-op in one or more of the following ways
 - a. Give your time to WIGC projects such as the Food Hub, Buyers Club, Marketing Committee, and other programs and projects WIGC creates.
 - b. Promote your membership in WIGC to customers, colleagues, and friends.
 - c. Encourage others to join and build WIGC membership

- d. Participate and promote WIGC events.
- e. Attend annual meetings and vote for board members and resolutions

Membership Communication and Corrective Action Policy

As stated in the organizational By-Laws of WIGC, the Board reserves the right to deny membership to applicants or to terminate the membership of existing Members if it is determined that the Member in question is ineligible for membership, has conducted activities contrary to the best interests of the cooperative, has violated the terms of the cooperative's Articles of Incorporation, or the WIGC By-Laws, or the WIGC Production Standards and Member Obligation Policies. Violations of the policies may erode the value and viability of the WIGC, its brand and its members.

Any WIGC member who knowingly violates WIGC and WIGC programs' policies and guidelines may face temporary or permanent expulsion and termination of enrollment in the WIGC, through the process outlined in the organizational by-laws and below. WIGC reserves the right to make unannounced visits to member businesses to determine if WIGC policies and standards are being followed.

- The first offense shall be met with a written warning disclosing the nature of the violation.
- The second offense shall be met with a written description of the violation, full disclosure of the evidence, and suspension of the Member's participation in WIGC programs for a period of 30 days.
- The third offense shall be met with a written description of the violation and full disclosure of the evidence, and will initiate a hearing before the WIGC Board of Directors where the Member will have the opportunity to present a defense. The hearing will be held no less than 30 days following written notice being provided to the Member. Following the hearing, the Board of Directors will elect to retain or terminate the Member's enrollment in the WIGC.
- Terminations proceed in the manner outlined in the organizational by-laws.
- The Board's decision may include eligibility for terminated Members to re-apply for membership after a specified waiting period, at the discretion of the Board.
- At any stage prior to termination, the Member retains the right to present evidence to defend their actions for consideration by the Board, and access to evidence of the alleged violation.

Member termination is a matter not to be taken lightly, and will be entertained only as a last resort. In keeping with the reputation of cooperatives in observing ethical business practices, Directors must at all times exercise fair play, impartiality, and employ due process as outlined in the organizational by-laws and policy disciplinary and expulsion provisions.

Membership Dues

Membership dues are established by the board, and may change over time.

Membership dues are as follows:

Cooperative Share: \$250

A cooperative share is a one time purchase of an ownership share in WIGC, which gives the member a vote in WIGC business, and an opportunity to be on the WIGC board.

Annual dues: \$50

Annual dues for members ensure continued support and participation from WIGC shareholders in the operations of WIGC and its programs.

Non-member Vendor Annual Fee: \$150

Annual Vendor Fees apply to those sellers who wish to participate in the WIGC Food Hub without becoming shareholding members of WIGC, or who aren't able to join because they live off-island, such as regionally sourced dairy producers. Vendors commit to the same standards as WIGC members to sell through the WIGC Food Hub.

In addition to these membership and vendor fees, WIGC is offering a Founding Member Package for those members who purchase shares by December 31, 2020.

Founding Member Package- \$275 (share and one year annual dues)

Whidbey Island Grown members who are current on their membership will have their annual dues waived for one year when they purchase a Cooperative Share.

**WHIDBEY ISLAND GROWN COOPERATIVE
MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION AGREEMENT**

WHEREAS **WHIDBEY ISLAND GROWN COOPERATIVE** (hereinafter “**WIGC**”) has incorporated as a cooperative association under the laws of the State of Washington for the purpose of facilitating the growth of the local agricultural market and strengthening resilience of the local economy and community; and

WHEREAS the undersigned (hereinafter “Subscriber”) seeks to become a member of WIGC for the purpose of participating in the said purpose of growing the local agricultural market and strengthening the local economy and community, and

WHEREAS Subscriber pledges to adhere to WIGC’s standards for production and cooperation, and

WHEREAS Subscriber pledges to participate in building the market for local agriculture and local business on Whidbey island by taking actions listed in the WIGC Membership Commitments, and

WHEREAS Subscriber is willing to acquire one share of common stock in WIGC required to become a member of WIGC on the terms and conditions set forth below;

IT IS AGREED as follows:

1. Subscriber will acquire one share of common stock in the WIGC for the price of Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$250.00). Upon receipt of this agreement, Subscriber shall be entitled to one non-cumulative vote in the affairs of the WIGC as provided in its governing documents. The WIGC, through its Board of Directors, will establish policies with regard to refund of this share purchase price should Subscriber withdraw as a member at a later date,

2. Subscriber has received and reviewed the WIGC “Membership Guide”, the provisions of which are incorporated herein by this reference, and agrees that it will comply with the provisions and requirements of the same, as well as other requirements established by the Board of Directors of the Cooperative for its members.

DATED this ___ day of _____, 20__.

Subscriber:

Signature

Print Name: _____