

Task 1.4 Benefits = Responsibility

Purpose

Are you a member of a club, a team, or an organization? Why did you join? Cooperatives are an organization of members with a common goal. People choose to join cooperatives that meet their personal goals and provide them personal benefit. Members receive many valuable benefits, but with those benefits come great responsibilities.

People become members of cooperatives to have access to markets, services, or goods that they normally would not. As a democratic member, they also have the advantage of making decisions and voicing concerns about the business. As a member of the cooperative, he or she can have an influential political voice when it comes to local issues. Members receive returns based upon the income of the cooperative and a member's patronage. The more a member patronizes the cooperative, the higher the return, called a patronage refund. Membership in a cooperative also ensures economic viability in local communities.

To receive benefits, the member must uphold their responsibilities. Members provide capital funding to the cooperative. Cooperatives expect members to patronize the cooperative they join. Members should purchase services and products from the cooperative regardless of price. Membership fees and the member use of the cooperative provides the capital. Cooperatives invest a portion of the patronage refund due to the member back into the cooperative.

It is the responsibility of the member to be informed about the cooperative and what it can do for them. General information includes the purpose, objectives, policies, and issues facing the cooperative. Being an informed member allows a person to make conscious decisions when voting to select board members and directors. Cooperatives listen to all members by electing board members. If a member does not know enough about the cooperative or its board of director candidates, he or she is failing their duty as a cooperative member. Finally, members should review annual reports and consider their use of the cooperative to determine if they should retain membership.

Why do members in your local community participate in the cooperative business structure? What are their responsibilities and benefits of being a member?

Materials

Per group of four students:

- Poster paper
- Strip of tape
- Permanent marker

Per student:

- Pencil
- *Task 1.4 Evaluation Rubric*

Procedure

Your class will host a local cooperative member who will speak about his or her membership. Work with the class to prepare a list of questions to ask the member. Use the questions to determine whether you would be interested in joining the cooperative.

Part One – Individual Questions

1. Write three questions you have about cooperative membership in Table 1 on the student worksheet.
2. Write three questions you have about cooperative responsibilities in Table 1 on the student worksheet.

Part Two – Question Categories

1. In a group of four, divide a poster paper into five sections, as shown in Figure 1. Title each section as one of the following areas.
 - General information
 - Patronage
 - Decision making
 - Evaluation
 - Community and policy
2. Select a recorder, reporter, facilitator, and interviewer in your group. They will have the following responsibilities.
 - Recorder – record all questions on the poster paper.
 - Reporter – report all questions to the class.
 - Facilitator – facilitate equal discussion from all group members.
 - Interviewer – ask questions of the cooperative member during his or her visit.

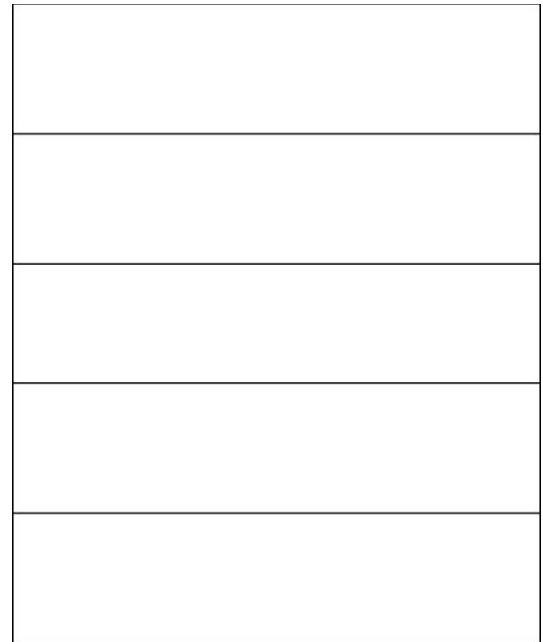


Figure 1. Poster Example

3. Have your facilitator share his or her questions with the group and then facilitate the process for each member sharing their questions.
4. After all group members have shared their questions, as a group, determine which two questions you would like to ask for each of the five categories on the poster paper. Develop new questions if needed.
 - The facilitator should listen and lead the discussion.
 - The recorder should record two questions for each category on the poster paper.
5. Your teacher will call upon the reporter of each group to report on the questions they would like to ask.
 - After the report, tape the poster on the wall for your peers to review.

Part Three – Question Selection

Your teacher will assign your group one of the five questioning categories to be responsible for during the interview. Decide upon two questions you would like to ask the cooperative member. Reflect on the reports from the other groups and refer to the posters as needed. Record your group's final questions in the appropriate category in Table 2 on the student worksheet. Have the reporter share your questions with the class. Write down each group's questions in Table 2.

Part Four – Interview

The local cooperative member will visit the class for one period. Your group's interviewer will ask his or her assigned questions as instructed by your teacher. Record answers to each question in Table 2. After students ask assigned questions, feel free to ask the member other questions you have so that you can write a summary about cooperative membership.

Summarize the interview describing the cooperative membership. Your summary should include the following and will be assessed using *Task 1.4 Evaluation Rubric*.

- An introduction explaining the structure of the cooperative
- Body including membership benefits and responsibilities
- Conclusion explaining whether or not you would become a member and why
- Have correct spelling and grammar

Conclusion

1. Why do agricultural producers form cooperatives?
2. What are the advantages for an agricultural producer to join a cooperative?
3. What benefits does a cooperative member have?
4. Why do cooperative members need to uphold their responsibilities?

Name _____



Task 1.4 Student Worksheet

Table 1. Individual Questions

Benefits	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Responsibilities	
1.	
2.	
3.	

Table 2. Class Questions

General Information	
1.	
Answer:	
2.	
Answer:	
Patronage	
1.	
Answer:	
2.	
Answer:	
Decision Making	
1.	
Answer:	
2.	
Answer:	
Evaluation	
1.	
Answer:	
2.	
Answer:	
Community and Policy	
1.	
Answer:	
2.	
Answer:	