



Réseau COOP

La Fédération des coopératives
gérées par les travailleurs



**CWCF
FCCT**

CANADIAN
WORKER
CO-OP
FEDERATION

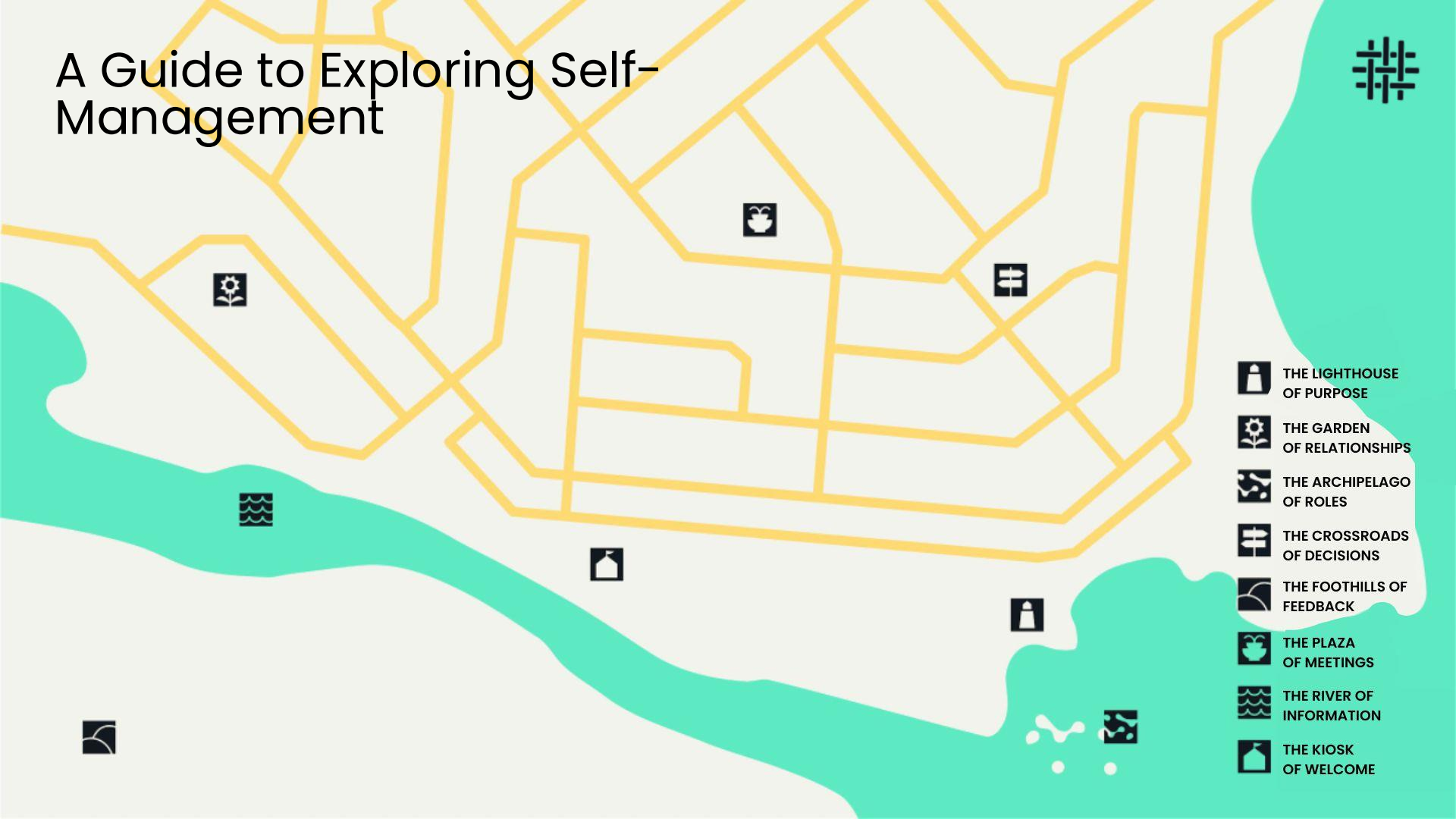
FÉDÉRATION
CANADIENNE DES
COOPÉRATIVES
DE TRAVAIL

A Guide to Exploring Self-Management

Québec



A Guide to Exploring Self-Management



THE LIGHTHOUSE
OF PURPOSE



THE GARDEN
OF RELATIONSHIPS



THE ARCHIPELAGO
OF ROLES



THE CROSSROADS
OF DECISIONS



THE FOOTHILLS OF
FEEDBACK



THE PLAZA
OF MEETINGS



THE RIVER OF
INFORMATION



THE KIOSK
OF WELCOME



Acknowledgements



This guidebook emerged from a desire to document self-management practices within co-operatives and thus lend additional support to those who opt for flatter management practices.

It could not have come about without the generous participation from six co-operatives, all members of Réseau COOP, who agreed to be interviewed about their organizational practices

THANK
YOU!

Activcoop
Café Campus
Code Opale

L'ILOT
Molotov
Percolab

The resources presented in this guide were created by individuals and organizations that hope to share the fruits of their research with as many people as possible. Many are under [CC-BY-SA](#) licenses (Creative Commons). We are grateful for their abundance mindset.

If you have benefited from their work, we invite you make a donation within your means.

The English edition was created under the direction of the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation, with translation by [Coop l'Argot](#)

Interviews Béatrice Drolet and Gabrielle Beaulieu
Idea and Text Gabrielle Beaulieu
Graphic Design Collaboration Spéciale

Introduction



Worker co-operative members aspire towards a democratic model of operations and are increasingly taking an interest in self-governing models¹.

What is the meaning of my contributions?

To what extent can I express my own ideas and take initiative?

How can we better share power?

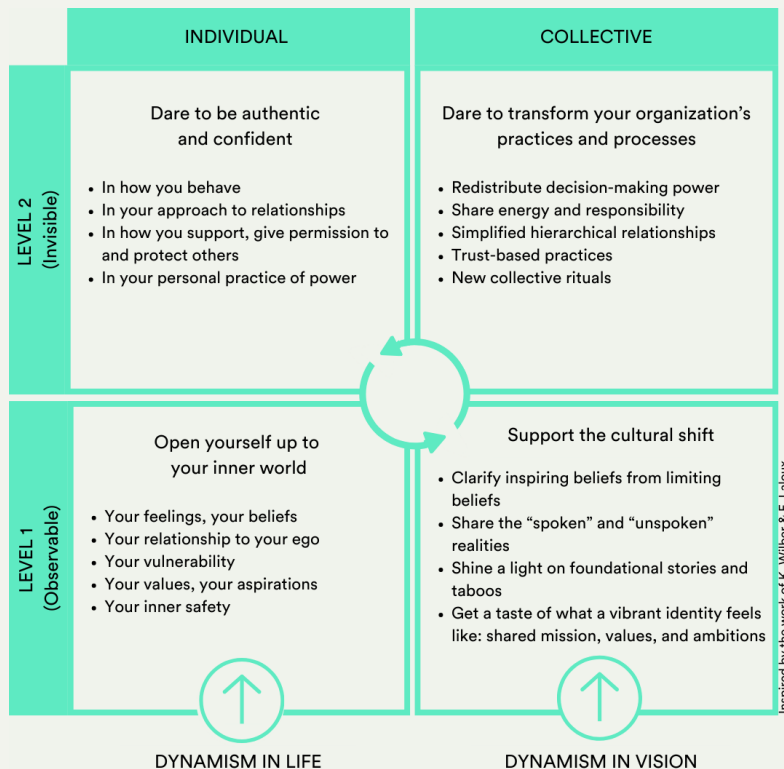
How can we move towards more fluidity and trust in our relationships?

Our individual and collective responses to these (and many other) questions will guide how we operate as co-operatives, though we are often unaware of it. They determine everything from our structures and practices, to how we make decisions and distribute roles, to how we hold meetings.

This guidebook was designed to support workers who are interested in embarking on a journey of change, regardless of their co-op's stage of development. Taking on the work of exploring new ways of being and collaborating that go against standard models means we need to revisit the underlying assumptions that guide our existing approaches. It's a fascinating journey, but not without its challenges.

¹Our definition: A set of organizational practices that seek to distribute authority while ensuring that responsibilities are clear and maximizing autonomy for each member of the organization.

Introduction^(continued)



According to Toscane, in-depth organizational transformation takes place in four dimensions simultaneously (see table on the left).

This guidebook is filled with activities and resources that address the individual, collective, visible and invisible aspects of the change your organization seeks. Bear in mind that this is not a step-by-step guide to transitioning to a new form of governance, but rather a space for active exploration.

All the same, it's important to remember that the map is not the land. The resources in this guide are signposts, but you won't discover anything if you don't walk the path at your own pace.

This is a document which is evolving, and thus, an imperfect one. Your feedback is crucial to helping us improve it and, perhaps, produce a new version next year.



How should you use this guidebook?

This guide will take you to eight different "locations" in the world of self-management. Material will be presented in the same way at each location:

- A **summary** of what six co-ops, all members of Réseau COOP, shared with us about their self-management practices. We are deeply grateful for their help.
- **Let's take stock!** This section contains one or more activities to take the group's temperature and gauge where you're at. We hope that your observations will spark a fruitful conversation.
- Learn more: articles, videos, worksheets... In short, it's a list of resources to explore based on your interests and needs.
- **Your turn!** Now's the time to take action. Here you'll find suggestions to test out new practices, experiment, create pilot projects, etc.

Click [here](#) for a growing list of articles and tools (most or many are in French) to complement the content in the Learn More sections... This list includes accompanying resources, several from co-operatives that are members of Réseau COOP (page 2).

WHERE TO START YOUR JOURNEY

Frederic Laloux developed a video series for people who wish to profoundly reinvent their modes of governance. You may find his reflections useful when choosing your exploration journey:

- Clarify your purpose and vision before starting. Self-management does not work unless all the people involved know where they're going and why.
- According to Laloux, implementing five key processes is all it takes to reach 90% self-management. These processes are: decision-making, transforming positions and roles, information transparency, managing individual and collective performance (evaluation procedures) and, lastly, conflict resolution.
- Should we focus on mindsets, culture or systems? In order to reshape processes like those listed above, we also must transform our attitudes, behaviours and culture.
- Should we adopt a ready-made system? Some reflections on adopting sociocracy, holacracy, or another ready-made system as opposed to evolving your own version of self-management

We'll close with some advice from Romain Vigne, from Université du Nous, on approaches to this process:

- ☐ Experiment and adapt (rather than plan and control)
- ☐ Ensure that you have what you need (time, energy, resources)
- ☐ Be transparent and communicate regularly
- ☐ Acknowledge and support your allies
- ☐ Make the decision to change



THE LIGHTHOUSE OF PURPOSE



The lighthouse of purpose has been illuminating the night along the coast for decades. When it was built, its mission was to guide merchant ships as they sailed the sea of Trust. Its purpose has evolved, and it now serves as a site of memory and transmission for new arrivals and curious passers-by. The stories of this region's defining myths are shared here. While it may look different, the lighthouse's role as a guide remains.



Highlights from our interviews with member co-ops

- Sometimes a co-op's purpose has been part of its DNA from the very start and has remained unchanged over time. Some co-ops took advantage of the pandemic to reflect and re-evaluate themselves. Others will choose to present their purpose in a manifesto or would like to draft one.
- The co-ops we spoke to use different strategies to ensure that there is a good alignment between their organization's day-to-day work, purpose and vision. One developed a special decision-making process to evaluate the impact of individual and collective decisions on the co-op. In another, a strategic committee includes representation from each of the co-op's committees, regularly reporting to the Board of Directors (Board). This helps ensure that the committee's efforts are aligned with the co-op's purpose.
- Most co-ops have strong and clearly defined values, for example, in a statement of values or a code of ethics. These values help guide internal operations, decision-making, the hiring process, and, in some cases, client selection or relationships with the local community.
- Strategic planning is often assigned to a committee. In cases where a co-op has an executive director, this person plays an important role in laying the groundwork, which is then discussed with the Board and the full membership.

Let's take stock!

Your co-op's purpose is its "why"; the reason behind its existence beyond a mere objective. When clearly articulated, it has the power to inspire the full breadth of the community around your co-operative, attract the resources you need, and align your efforts.

If you have already written a mission statement, it might be an interesting exercise to revisit it with the help of a living diagnosis for collectives, a tool inspired by the book, *La boîte à outils de l'intelligence collective* (available in French).

Here's how to conduct the exercise:

1. Map out a scale from 1 to 5, on the ground or along a wall. Leave enough space between the numbers for several people to stand. 1 = not at all and 5 = totally. You could also use another type of scale, such as percentages.
2. Ask your participants to move to the number that best represents their opinion. Here are some sample questions you might use:
 - a. Do you find this purpose statement to be inspiring?
 - b. Does this purpose statement help you make decisions, such as identifying your priorities, or saying NO to certain things?
 - c. Is this purpose authentic? Does it correspond with your perception of the organization?
 - d. Do you feel proud when you describe this purpose to your loved ones or acquaintances?



THE LIGHTHOUSE OF PURPOSE



Let's take stock! (continued)

3. Once everyone has taken their positions, ask them to look at the distribution and if they have any comments.
4. Ask each group to discuss the reasons why they chose this number. Have one or two people per position give a summary to the full group.
5. Optional: Invite the participants to move to a higher score by asking them what it would take for them to move up one level on the scale? After leaving some time for discussion, ask for comments.
6. Complete the exercise with a quick go-around question: what stood out to you? What did we learn? What do we want to change?

Learn more...

- Evolutionary Purpose: an 8-minute [video](#) by Frederic Laloux.
- Laloux's [full series](#) on the topic.

Your turn!

Liberating Structures has developed the [9 Whys](#) exercise to make the purpose of your work together clear in 20 minutes. This exercise makes it possible to discover what your group members consider essential, laying the groundwork for a future plan. A powerful objective motivates people to participate.

Try including an empty chair that represents your purpose in your work meetings for a few months. You can use [the chair in different ways](#). After a few meetings, evaluate its effects.

Another exercise from Liberating Structures, [Purpose to Practice](#), helps define the fundamental elements that will determine the long-term success and resistance of a given initiative (objective, principles, participants, structure, practices).

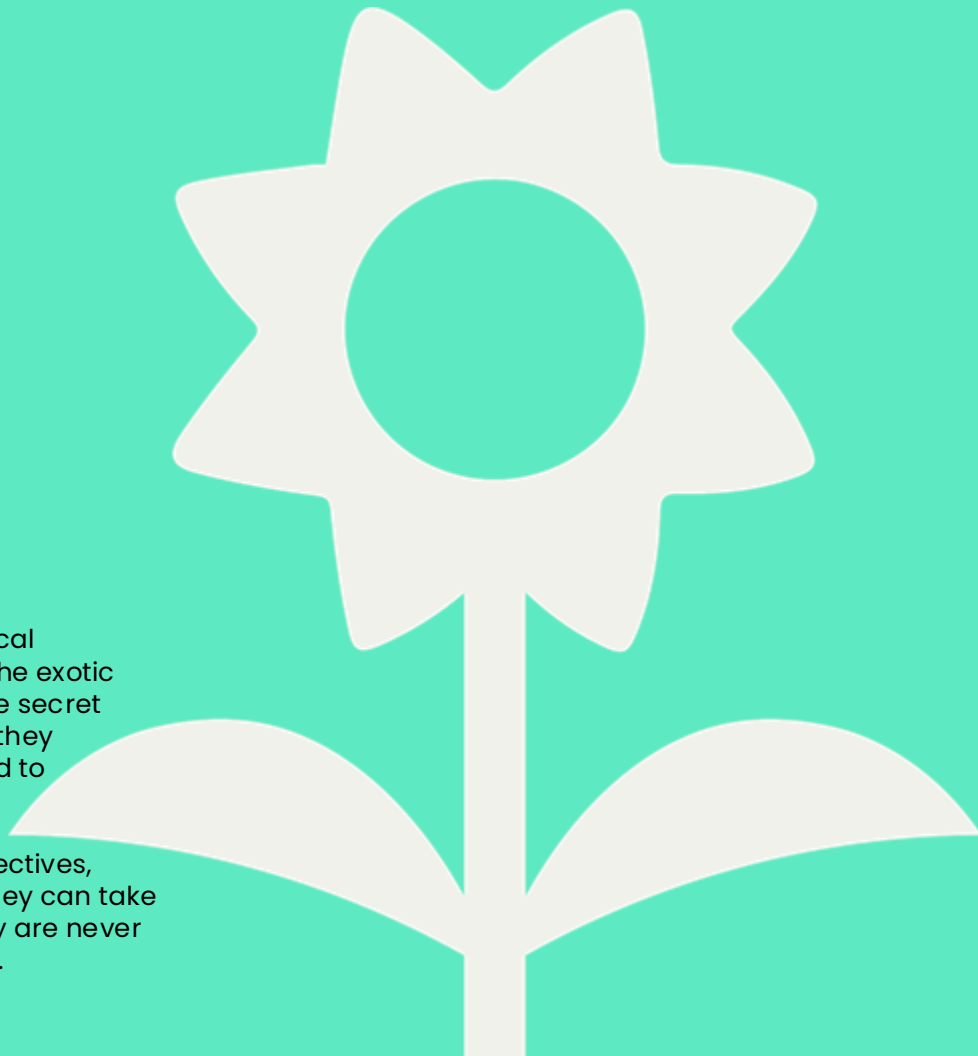


THE GARDEN OF RELATIONSHIPS



The garden of relationships attracts many visitors. Local residents call it "a little slice of paradise" because of the exotic plants found there—a rarity in this climate. What is the secret behind this success? The people who work there say they learned to cultivate their relationships as they learned to cultivate the garden.

They take the time to listen to each other: their perspectives, desires, and needs. Tensions are addressed before they can take root and take over shared spaces. Trust and harmony are never "won," but are instead the result of constant attention.





THE GARDEN OF RELATIONSHIPS

Highlights from our interviews with member co-ops

- The four keys to building trust: transparency, consistency, listening, authenticity.
- Transparency: There are formal processes to ensure that information is circulated. People know the reasoning behind decisions .
- Consistency: Showing consistency in choices and day-to-day management builds trust. We consider individual and organizational needs. It's not just one person who determines our orientations .
- Listening: We take the time we need to listen to one another and dialogue, generally outside of operational meeting time.
- Authenticity: This is fostered by the co-op's culture. For example, having a culture that encourages feedback, or a Slack channel for sharing feelings.
- Conflicts can take over a lot of energy and lead to people leaving. Not many co-ops have a clear system for conflict resolution, aside from encouraging the people involved to settle their differences between themselves. Here are some examples of conflict prevention: Non-violent communication (NVC) training is mandatory or strongly encouraged, the co-op regularly holds a discussion circle (conflict is seen as an expression of organizational tension), or the co-op has written a charter that provides structure to how members collaborate.
- Who should mediate? Sometimes a member of the Board, a person with a coordination role, or someone from outside of the co-op. The perception of equity is important in this process, which can be a challenge when members are also friends.

Let's take stock!



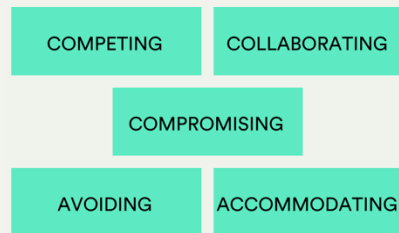
DISCOVERING YOUR STYLE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Print and fill out this [questionnaire](#) to identify the styles that you tend to adopt most often when conflict arises at work. Do you tend to make compromises? Avoid the issue? Impose your solutions on others? Whatever your answer may be, there will be situations where your preferred attitude is appropriate, and others where it perpetuates the problem, or even makes it worse .

The questionnaire is based on the Thomas Kilmann model, which can be accessed online for a fee.

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Perhaps you have already glimpsed the source of your difficulties with some colleagues just by filling out the questionnaire. The easiest way to create an overall picture of the styles of conflict management within your co-operative is by marking each person's style on a table like this one.



SUGGESTED GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are your takeaways from this (distribution of styles, reactions, etc.)?
2. What conclusions can you make? What impact does this have on your working environment?
3. What should we do now? What are the logical next steps?



Learn more...

To ensure that trust can be built, and that each person can express themselves and develop their potential, we need a certain baseline of safety. .

- A 3-minute [video](#) on the Karpman drama triangle, with its roles of villains, victims and heroes, and how to break out of it. (From the Conscious Leadership Group).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Conflict resolution [principles, practices and process](#) from Loomio Cooperative.

Your turn!

The card game "Listen For..." created by Percolab, helps players create moments of authentic connection and grow closer through storytelling. Opportunities to try the game are offered for free each month. Click [here](#) to sign up.

One of the simplest avenues for improving the quality of relationships is by practicing non-violent (or conscious) communication. There are many NVC instructors, as well as online resources for self-directed learning. Here is a [list](#) of resources (most or many in French) to help facilitate your research and find the right resource for your situation. You can find resources in English [here](#).

If your team has not yet collectively decided how to prevent and resolve conflicts, this is your opportunity to do so. We recommend the following process:

1. Create a working group made up of a diverse group of people with an interest in conflict resolution, or allocate the task to the appropriate committee or circle in your structure.
2. Make a survey on the topic to identify your team's expectations or needs, or take the time to discuss the matter in a team meeting.
3. Take inspiration from others when creating your protocol (for example, Loomio, L'Instant Z or Enspiral). It's best to start simple and add detail later.
4. Make a proposal and then amend it based on the team's comments and suggestions.
5. Adopt the protocol using your standard decision-making model.
6. Keep track of your experiences, successes and challenges. Regularly revise and adjust as needed.



THE ARCHIPELAGO OF ROLES



The archipelago of roles is made up of over twenty little islands. Some people see it as a roughly circular structure. For the kayakers who enjoy spending time there, more than anything else, the archipelago represents the freedom of moving from island to island as your skills allow, following your whims and the currents.



THE ARCHIPELAGO OF ROLES



Highlights from our interviews with member co-ops

- Many co-ops are inspired by holacracy or sociocracy when building their operating structure. In addition to individual roles, they have circles or committees with specific responsibilities. Some co-ops will devote a percentage of work time (5-15%) to these responsibilities, which are usually related to co-op development.
- Some co-ops have a coordinator (general or department) role. The people in these roles generally don't have supervisory authority, with some exceptions. In one case, the Board meets every two or three weeks to make decisions and determine priorities for the General Coordinator.

Lets take stock!

Does everyone in your team have the same understanding of the responsibilities associated with your respective roles?

Let's find out with the following exercise (inspired by a tool from [Hyper Island Toolbox](#)).

You'll need a whiteboard, markers, and sticky notes.

- 1. Identify the roles** (5 min). List all the roles in the team in the "Roles" section of the table you have prepared (see the template below). If multiple people share one role, have them sit together.
- 2. Clarify your own responsibilities** (10 min). Identify three to five primary responsibilities associated with your role. Write each responsibility on a sticky note and sort them in order of priority.
- 3. Responsibilities of other roles** (5 min). For each of the other roles, write down two to three responsibilities that you think are priorities. You may think of responsibilities that don't fall clearly into one specific role. Write these down to address during group discussion time.
- 4. Discuss each role** (25 min). For each role, ask the person (or people) who hold(s) it to describe what they think about their role and place their sticky notes in the "what I think" column in order of priority. Now ask each person in the group to describe what they think about the role and ask them to put their sticky notes in the "what others think" column. Add any orphan responsibilities to the "unattributed responsibilities" section.
- 5. Conclusion** (15 min). What did you learn from this exercise? What surprised you? What, if any, are some next steps that can increase clarity and satisfaction with the co-op on this topic?

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES What I think...	RESPONSIBILITIES What others think...	UNATTRIBUTED RESPONSIBILITIES
ROLE			
ROLE			
ROLE			



Learn more...

- A chapter on circles and roles in *Sociocracy – A Brief Introduction* by Ted Rau (pages 14–25).
- An article from the Reinventing Organization wiki on Teal organizational structures.
- An election without candidates can help a group collectively delegate a role—for example, choosing leaders for the co-op. Its benefits include legitimizing the person who is elected, allowing each member to express their point of view, and making a decision that elicits more buy-in.
 - A guide from Sociocracy for All.

Your turn!

Is the distribution of roles and responsibilities clear in your co-op? Does everyone have the opportunity to evolve? Is your operating structure adapted to your current circumstances?

Depending on the nature of the challenges you are confronting, here are some possible actions you could take:

- Revisit the descriptions of your roles and specify the purpose, deliverables and sphere of authority for each. To what end? Encouraging creativity and initiative. To learn more, see this link, in French.
- Try out elections without candidates to collectively assign a key role if conditions are right for it (appropriate degree of trust among members, clear definition of the role, comfort with consent decision-making). For a complete description of the process, see this sheet by Université du Nous (translated from the original French), which includes tips for the facilitator and the person taking notes.
- If you feel the need to revisit your structure, one first step could be creating a working group charged with making a new proposal (after consulting with the people involved). You might take inspiration from holacracy, sociocracy, or other governance models.



THE CROSSROADS OF DECISIONS



When we approach the crossroads of decisions, we're likely to see a group of people in mid-debate. After spending several days exploring the city together, they no longer agree on the road to take. Worse yet, they don't know how to make a decision. Someone suggests flipping a coin. One person tries to impose their perspective on the rest, and then suggests taking a vote. Another person insists that the decision be made through consensus. The conversation is tense...





THE CROSSROADS OF DECISIONS

Highlights from our interviews with member co-ops

- It's a good idea to make a distinction between operational decisions (production) and decisions related to business administration (legal, financial, outreach aspects, etc.). Some co-ops take inspiration from sociocracy or holacracy by creating circles or committees that help distribute power and responsibilities.
- Business administration is an especially demanding challenge during the start-up phase because production requirements take a lot of energy, and the co-op is still developing its collective management model. There is often a fairly long period of trial and error before the co-op finds a satisfying formula. Burnout is a risk if hours spent on business administration are not counted towards workload, especially if this time is unpaid.
- Methods used: The majority of the co-ops we spoke to use consensus or consent decision-making techniques. Some use the advice-seeking process. After an initial experimental phase, most tend to formalize their processes by writing them down, which also facilitates the integration of new people.
- The role of the Board: It may play a key role, especially if the co-op has a General Coordinator. The Board of smaller co-ops may choose to agree that all members can participate in decision-making, or all members may be on the Board.



Let's take stock!

REFLECT ON YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Your personal baggage has an influence on how you envision power-sharing and decision-making, which in turn, has an impact on how your co-op functions. Here are some questions you can use to help with your individual exploration of this realm:

- What is your vision of power? If you had to come up with a metaphor to represent power, what would it be?
- When you think about positive experiences of power-sharing that you have had, what do these experiences have in common? Are there any lessons you can take from this for your co-op?

What do you take away from this exercise? Take note of what you would like to share with your team members.

MAP YOUR CURRENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

This exercise will help you see if you share the same vision of your decision-making model or if there are differences among your team. Plan for at least 60 minutes, or more depending on the size of your group and the discussion time you would like to allow for.

1. Start by discussing your personal reflections (see above).
2. Make a list of five decisions that your co-op must regularly make and/or that had a meaningful impact.
3. Make groups of two or three people and fill out the table as a group.
4. After 10-15 minutes, go through your classification as a large group, one decision at a time.
5. Discussion: What are your observations? What similarities and differences do you see between the responses? What does this show you?



THE CROSSROADS OF DECISIONS



Learn more...

ON SHARED GOVERNANCE IN GENERAL

- A 5-minute [video](#) on the philosophy behind the term "shared governance" by Université du Nous (English script available).
- An [introduction](#) to Framavox, an online tool that helps you make decisions collaboratively.

CONSENT DECISION-MAKING

Decisions are made when there are no objections.

- A 19-minute [video](#) on a fictional example of consent decision-making (by Université de Nous, English script).
- An [article](#) by Percolab on their generative decision-making process.
- A 6-minute [video](#) on consent decision-making in sociocracy (by Sociocracy for All).

ADVICE-SEEKING PROCESS

Any person to whom the group has given the authority can make a decision after having asked the opinion of people who will be affected by it and of experts in the field.

MAJORITY JUDGMENT

Each proposal is evaluated. Whichever option the majority deems worthy is selected.

- A one-minute video (in French) and FAQ (in English) [here](#).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Increase your understanding of cognitive biases (which influence our decision-making) with this [helpful online guide](#).
- Polarity Management: for more empathy in solving complex problems, a lengthy [article](#) on polarity management.



THE CROSSROADS OF DECISIONS



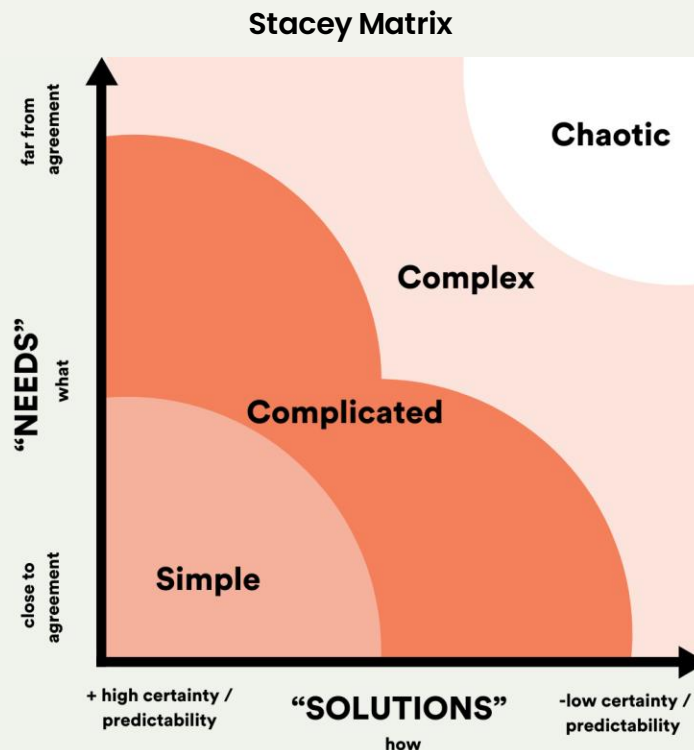
Your turn!

If you want to broaden your decision-making palette, you may want to get familiar with new methods.

- Try out majority judgment, using [this application](#).
- If you have an important decision to make, practice consent decision-making with the tools referenced in the previous section. If needed, ask for support from an external party to help you get familiar with this method
- If you want to create more autonomy around decision-making in your framework, try out the advice-seeking process.

What is the nature of your primary challenges? Simple? Complicated? Complex? Or chaotic? Are you approaching them in the right way? To get to the bottom of this, have some fun with this [exercise](#) from Liberating Structures, using the Stacey Matrix (on the right). You will need about 45 minutes. Make sure to designate one or two people to facilitate the exercise.

You can use [this process](#) developed by The Hum in a single one-to two-hour session to create your own decision-making protocol.





THE FOOTHILLS OF FEEDBACK



Hiking the foothills of feedback can help you take a break and discover some new perspectives. Families and clusters of friends like to picnic here.

It's an opportunity to have fun, chat, catch up, tell the unvarnished truth... These conversations help us take stock and leave feeling a little lighter.



Highlights from our interviews with member co-ops

FEEDBACK

- Feedback is seen as essential. It takes different forms in different organizational cultures. For example: asking for feedback over Slack, offering an evaluation process with clients at the end of a contract.
- Who is responsible for quality control (and must therefore ask for improvements to be made when needed)? Who that person is may not always be clear. Usually, it's the person who is responsible for the project or the coordinator. One co-op implemented a process to respond to complaints, and the Board is accountable to the management committees.

EVALUATION

- A few examples of practices:
 - Each member organizes and facilitates an annual meeting on their development where they ask for feedback from their colleagues.
 - Individual evaluations (every 18 months), are based on a triple-A appreciative feedback model (Appreciate, Amplify, Adjust). They cover all the roles occupied by the person being evaluated and are steered by the HR committee.
 - The skills framework used is from Inner Development Goals, which seeks to foster each person's development of the skills needed to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

- A few examples of practices:
 - A budget line exists for training costs.
 - Either each person is responsible for their own training plan, or a committee oversees this work.
 - In a co-op, workers are supported as they develop new skills, which can then be added to the co-op's service offer. Workers appreciate having this space to dream and develop.
 - Priority is given to management skills: a more experienced worker is paired up with a new hire to ensure that knowledge and skills are passed on.



THE FOOTHILLS OF FEEDBACK



Let's take stock!

DETERMINE YOUR COMFORT LEVEL WITH FEEDBACK

Regular and effective feedback is a key ingredient in developing constructive relationships. This quick exercise will help you get a sense of how your group handles feedback.

It can be done in person or online. You'll need a sticky note or a digital sticky note for each team member.

Here are the instructions:

1. Form groups of 4-6 people. Write the name of each person in your group on a sticky note and fill out the following two sentences.
 - a. What I appreciate the most about you is...
 - b. What I'd like to see more of from you is...
2. Write your name on the sticky note.
3. Once everyone in your group has finished writing, each person will give their feedback out loud and then pass their sticky note to the person in question (or send their virtual sticky note to the person during the online session).

Take time to discuss your experience after the exercise. What are your observations? What did you feel? What did you learn?

Learn more...

FEEDBACK

- Team Members Are Too Nice with Each Other, a [video](#) by Frederic Laloux (7 min.)
- Team Members Are Harsh with One Another, a [video](#) by Laloux (8 min.).

INDIVIDUAL REVIEW (OR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION)

- Going from a Culture of Evaluation to a Culture of Dialogue, an [article](#) by Percolab.
- For a process inspired by sociocracy, here is an [example](#) from the site Sociocracy For All.

SELF-CORRECTION

- A [video](#) by Laloux (13 min) on the basics of self-correcting systems.
- Examples of self-correcting systems in this [video](#) by Laloux (25 min).



Your turn!

FEEDBACK

Choose a feedback method that works for your context and culture, and practice, practice, practice.

Discuss how you will adopt this practice. For example, will you regularly take time as a team, or will you have individual objectives?

Make sure to take time to try it out (at least three months) and evaluate it.

EVALUATION

If you haven't found a satisfactory evaluation method yet, you can try this process, which uses a SWOB analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, barriers). This will help each person create their own development plan in collaboration with their colleagues.

Plan for about 3 hours for a 3-person group.

SELF-CORRECTION

There is an endless number of formulas to review a project, meeting or activity. What, So What, Now What, from Liberating Structure, helps your team reflect on a shared experience while avoiding unproductive conflict. Each person has the opportunity to be heard and shape new directions. Progressing in stages makes this exercise practical:

1. Collect the facts (What): "What happened?"
2. Make sense of these facts (So What): "What does this mean?"
3. Finally, determine what actions logically follow (Now What): "What do we do now?"

The shared progression eliminates most of the misunderstandings that otherwise fuel disagreements about what to do.



THE PLAZA OF MEETINGS



The Plaza of Meetings is in the centre of the city. It's where the population gathers to have a coffee and talk about the big and little things going on in their lives. There is a farmer's market each week where people can shop and meet local farmers. It's also a site where everything from the national holiday to weddings or birthdays is celebrated.



Highlights from our interviews with member co-ops:

- Co-operatives boast a huge variety of meeting rhythms and structures. Most of the co-ops we spoke to hold weekly or bimonthly meetings with the whole team that last two hours or less.
- Small group meetings: Project or event-specific, for committees, circles, sectors, or the Board...
- Tactical or strategic meetings: in membership meetings, two to four times a year. Tactical meetings every six weeks, in one co-op.
- Annual meeting, retreat-style in some cases. This meeting also serves to help build ties among team members.
- Several co-ops have adopted an agile meeting approach (co-creation of the agenda, rotating roles, etc.).

Let's take stock!

Use the triple-A feedback model to evaluate your meetings. You will need sticky notes, markers, and at least three big sheets of paper. If you're working online, you'll need a virtual whiteboard.

Here are the steps:

1. Choose which meetings you'd like to evaluate (all of the co-op's meetings or one specific category).

2. Write the following on the three sheets (one per sheet): Appreciate, Amplify, Adjust.
3. Ask participants to write their comments on sticky notes (one element per sticky note).
 - a. Appreciate: one or more elements I appreciate and why
 - b. Amplify: one or more elements that I'd like to amplify because I think we need more of it
 - c. Adjust: one or more elements that I'd like to adjust and why
4. Once everyone has placed their sticky notes, ask the group to read the comments.
5. Try using the 1-2-4-All exercise from Liberating Structures to collect suggestions to improve your co-op's meetings. The method is as follows:
 - a. Have each person reflect in silence for 1 minute.
 - b. Participants will come up with ideas in pairs based on their personal reflections for 2 minutes.
 - c. Each pair will share their ideas with another pair for further development for 4 minutes. The group notes down one or two main ideas on a sticky note.
 - d. Ask the group, "What is the key idea that came out of your conversation?" Repeat the cycle as needed.
6. You can decide next steps using your standard decision-making model. See the following sections for suggestions.



THE PLAZA OF MEETINGS



Learn more...

- A chapter on meetings in [Sociocracy – A Brief Introduction](#) (pages 38–49).
- The Six Thinking Hats method was developed by Dr. Edward De Bono. It allows for more effective collective reflections on things like a new project or next steps by helping ensure that everyone's perspectives are considered.

Your turn!

How you start and end your meetings will set their tone. If they are properly led, check-ins and check-outs can create a welcoming and fun environment that encourages learning. If you want to taste the benefits of this approach and try out check-ins and check-outs for a month, [this sheet](#) from Hyper Island Toolbox can provide you with more information. Has a team member showed interest in this topic? Ask them to take on the role of facilitator for this experiment.

If you're tired of your normal meeting format, there are several concrete ideas in the Learn More section that you can choose from.

THE SIX HATS

Are your meetings going in every direction? Sick of watching the same clashes between the optimists and the devil's advocates, the creatives and the type "A"s, or the objectively minded versus the intuitively guided?

You can limit unproductive tension and meaningless debate by adding De Bono's 6 Thinking Hats method to your toolkit.

You can facilitate a creative exercise with this method by following the instructions in this [guide](#) from Université de Nous .



THE RIVER OF INFORMATION



The river is this region's primary channel of communication. If you stop and look closely, you can see how its colours shift from blue, to green, to grey...This river is known for its extremely clear waters and accessible shorelines—there's no private property blocking your path. A promenade runs along its banks and is a popular choice for strolling, either alone or in good company .



Highlights from our interviews with member co-ops

- All information is available to everyone, except for certain personal information (private data). Documents are generally available on Google Drive/Suite or Dropbox. This transparency makes it easy to collaborate but doesn't significantly add to members' mental loads.
- For day-to-day communication, the co-ops we spoke to use Slack or Gchat.
- Several co-ops use project management software, such as Asana, Confluence or Paymo. There are specific applications (like Glassfrog) that can be used to facilitate the implementation of holacracy.

Let's take stock!

The following is a creative destruction exercise likely to leave your team laughing and perhaps a little embarrassed—and with a renewed perspective on how information flows through your co-op.

1. Make a list of everything you could do to create the worst flow of information possible between your team members, to the point where the information you need is never available at the right time to do your work or make informed decisions.
2. Go through this list point by point, asking at each point, "Are we currently doing anything that resembles this in any way?" Be brutally honest. Then, make a second list of your counter-productive activities, programs and procedures .
3. Review the items in your second list and decide which first steps would help you put an end to the items that you know lead to undesirable results.

For more details on this method, see [Triz](#)



THE RIVER OF INFORMATION



Learn more...

- A [section](#) from the Reinventing Organizations wiki on information flow.
- An [article](#) from Ragnarson on the importance of transparency in self-managed organizations.
- An [article](#) from Corporate Rebels, a London-based company, on radical transparency practices .

Your turn!

In an organization that encourages its workers to share power and autonomy, making sure information circulates freely can quickly become a challenge; each person works in their own way and chaos quickly follows when it becomes impossible to find a simple piece of information in a labyrinth of shared folders...Does this situation seem familiar?

1. Form a working group. Make sure they're a diverse group from across the organisation who understand the benefits of organising well.

Give them responsibility for simplifying the amount of workflow options there are in your key processes. That doesn't mean "one way to rule them all", but could there be 3 or 5 instead of n ways? (where n is the number of people in the team/organisation!).

The working group will need some regular extra time allocated to this, as your colleagues will need some coaching, encouragement, and information sharing to work out the best workflow options for the majority of people and scenarios. Don't even start to imagine you can find a silver bullet digital tool to solve this pain point without first spending a year making small but regular progress here.

1. Set up a wiki or information home base, a one-stop shop for finding key info in your organisation.

The working group can help curate this site, so it doesn't get too out-of-control. Instead of always asking that same one person, now anyone can add that FAQ to the wiki.

It doesn't have to be complicated or expensive; there are many potential options.

1. Regular updates. Make sure there's a regular rhythm for this group to update the organisation on their progress. This will be the key opportunity to communicate how the changes are going to help everyone and a chance to keep reminding people of all the amazing information available in ONE place! The best change happens when you take everyone with you.



THE KIOSK OF WELCOME



The welcome kiosk is a first stop for visitors who are curious to get to know the region better. Experienced guides take the time to teach them about the particularities of the area, must-see sites and local habits. Every single visitor (practically) walks away with a personalized itinerary and a taste for adventure.



Highlights from our interviews with member co-ops

- Recruitment: Welcoming and integrating people who can grow and thrive in a different environment is a sizeable challenge, especially because co-ops often rely on word-of-mouth to recruit new members.
- In one co-op, interested individuals can participate in team meetings (seats are left for guests), which can be an entry point to a future collaboration, or even hiring.
- Interviews are an opportunity to share about the co-op's operations with full transparency. We take the time to explain it.
- Some co-ops have a well-defined and documented integration process. It involves several steps, which often correspond to different categories of members. Some examples of processes:
 - Integration plans are personalized. The first step involves meeting the circles to see which ones they might join. They receive support and accompaniment during their first months.
 - As soon as they join, they receive a guide document as well as the employee handbook. In addition, there is a system that pairs new arrivals with an experienced member or mentor.
 - Five-Step Progression 1. Friend of the co-op. 2. Member in immersion. 3. Auxiliary member. 4. Member. 5. Key member. Each step involves its own meetings and opportunities to learn. This process helps you ensure that the relationship is mutually beneficial.

Let's take stock!

If you have brought on more than two new people in the past year, the fishbowl exercise might be a good way to learn more about their experience joining the co-op.

1. Invite them to sit in a circle in the middle of the room. Have the rest of the group form a large circle around them.
2. Ask them to describe their experiences as a new person in the co-op—both good and bad—in an informal, specific and open way. Ask them to speak as though they were simply chatting among themselves, pretending the larger group is not there—as if they were swapping stories over dinner.
3. Allow the conversation to come to a natural end, generally after 10 to 25 minutes. The people in the outer circle listen and observe.
4. Debriefing as a large group: What stood out to you during this conversation? Is there something about your onboarding processes that needs to be changed?



Learn more...

- A section from the Reinventing Organizations wiki on the topic.

Your turn!

Which aspect of your onboarding process would you most like to work on?

Using what you learned from the fishbowl exercise, or simply from talking with recent co-op recruits, you may be interested in taking on one or more of the following tasks:

- Creating an introductory booklet that walks new hires through the co-op, its operations, the steps in the onboarding process, etc.
- Define the levels of commitment involved in joining the co-op. Is there a probation period? Are there different member statuses? If so, what conditions must be met in order to change status?
- Create a system that pairs new arrivals with an experienced member.
- Develop a training session that explains the basics of your internal practices (for example, meetings, decision-making).

Conclusion

What better way to conclude than with a poem!



A NEW CIVILIZATION

We are here. We are waking up now, out of the past, to dream a bigger dream.

We are friends and equals, we are diverse and unique, and we're united for something bigger than differences.

We believe in freedom and co-operation, abundance and harmony.

We are a culture emerging, a renaissance of the essence of humanity...

*We don't play to win, we play to live and learn.
We act out of inspiration, love and integrity.
We explore, we discover, we feel and we laugh.
We are building a world that works for everyone.
We endeavour to live our lives to their fullest potential.
We are independent, self-sufficient and responsible.
We relate to each other in peace, with compassion and respect, we unite in community...*

We weave the threads of the new times.

We are the new civilization...

excerpted from "We are the New Civilization"



Réseau COOP

1431 rue Fullum, bureau 206,
Montréal, Québec, H2K0B5

514.526.6267
info@reseau.coop
reseau.coop



CWCFFCCT

CANADIAN
WORKER
CO-OP
FEDERATION

FÉDÉRATION
CANADIENNE DES
COOPÉRATIVES
DE TRAVAIL

104, 402 - 30th Ave NE
Calgary, Alberta T2E 2E3

403.276.8250
exec-assist@canadianworker.coop
www.canadianworker.coop