A DEEPER DIVE FROM VOLUME 5

Engaging Younger Members in Your Co-op

Questions to ask and tips to try for reaching younger members.

ABOUT THE DEEPER DIVES

Deeper Dives are practical companions to the Co-op Foundations Series. Each one picks up a topic from a volume and goes a little further. This one builds on Volume 5, Member Engagement.

Why This Matters

A co-op runs best when its board and meetings reflect the full membership, including members of every age. Younger members are voters, volunteers, and potential board candidates, just like everyone else.

But younger members tend to be harder to engage. Many are juggling full-time work and raising kids. They're also more likely to rent, which can make membership less clear. Renters who pay their own electric bill are members, though many don't realize it. Those with utilities included in the rent usually aren't members, since the landlord holds the account.

Reaching younger members may take some creativity, and the questions and tips that follow are a good place to start.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELVES

1. How many members under 40 do we have, and who are they (singles, couples, young families, renters, remote workers)?
2. Are our meetings at times and places that work for people with full-time jobs, young kids, or busy schedules?
3. In our first few contacts with a new member, do we send long letters, or short emails and texts?
4. Do younger members know they are owners, with a vote and capital credits?
5. Do we know what younger members in our community care about?
6. Have we asked younger members directly what would get them involved?
7. Who is out talking with members for us, and does anyone on that team look like the members we're trying to reach?
8. What is one new idea we could try this year to engage younger members? How will we measure the results?

Tips for Engaging Younger Members

Show up where they already are.

Hold meetings in community spaces people already visit. Family-friendly events reach parents, while a casual evening event reaches singles and couples.

Invite them in, don't just inform them.

Offer a short series, tour, or advisory group where younger members can learn how the co-op works and share ideas.

Match the platform to the age.

UNDER 30	30 TO 49
TikTok	Facebook
Instagram	Instagram
YouTube	YouTube

Use YouTube for short how-to videos, like setting up your account or getting ready for an outage.

Lead with local impact.

Share what the co-op does in the community, like local giving, scholarships, youth programs, and local renewable projects. These often matter to younger members, but many don't know their co-op offers them.

Let them do business on a phone.

Make it easy to start service, pay a bill, and report an outage from a phone, with text alerts.

Let peers carry the message.

Send younger staff and members out to talk with people their own age.

Try one thing and measure it.

1. Pilot one idea.
2. Measure the results.
3. Build on what works.

A co-op belongs to all of its members.
Make sure younger members know they're a part of it.

Sources: Pew Research Center, *Americans' Social Media Use 2025*, pewresearch.org. Also NRECA, Filene Research Institute, ACI Worldwide, and University of Groningen research on younger members.