



## **Policy Governance**

Approved in 2008  
by the Board of Directors  
Roanoke Natural Foods Co-Operative  
Roanoke, Virginia

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## **POLICY TYPE I: EXECUTIVE LIMITATIONS**

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-A: Global Executive Constraint**

*The General Manager (GM) shall not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is unlawful, imprudent, or in violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics and practices, or in violation of the Cooperative Principles.*

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-B: Treatment of Consumers**

*The General Manager will not fail to ensure that our customers receive high value in our products and services.*

The GM will not:

1. Fail to offer a range of products and services that meet our customers' needs
2. Allow an unsafe or unpleasant shopping experience for our customers
3. Operate without a system for soliciting and considering customer opinion regarding preferences, product requests, complaints and suggestions

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-C: Membership**

*The General Manager will not fail to establish, maintain, and promote a vital membership program that builds a sense of ownership among members.*

The GM will not:

1. Elicit information which is illegal or for which there is no clear necessity
2. Use methods of collecting, reviewing, transmitting, or storing information that fail to protect membership confidentiality

3. Fail to provide opportunities for members to participate in the co-operative
4. Fail to ensure that members are aware of Board actions, meetings, activities, and events
5. Fail to support established membership policies

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-D: Staff Treatment**

*With respect to relations with paid staff, the General Manager will not cause or allow conditions which are unfair, unsafe, or unclear.*

The GM will not:

1. Cause or allow discrimination among employees and potential employees based on other than business related criteria, individual performance, and qualifications
2. Operate without written personnel policies that:
  - a. Clarify rules for staff
  - b. Provide for effective handling of grievances
  - c. Are accessible to all employees
  - d. Inform staff that employment is neither permanent nor guaranteed
3. Cause or allow personnel policies to be inconsistently applied
4. Fail to provide for appropriate documentation, security and retention of personnel records and all personnel related decisions
5. Directly supervise or manage the work of any person who is a spouse, partner, immediate family member or person with whom a romantic or close familial relationship exists.

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-E: Compensation and Benefits**

*With respect to employment, compensation, and benefits to employees, consultants, and contract workers, the GM shall not cause or allow jeopardy to financial integrity or to public image.*

Further, without limiting the scope of the previous statement by the following, the GM shall not:

1. Change the GM's own compensation and benefits, except as his or her benefits are consistent with a package for all other employees
2. Promise or imply permanent or guaranteed employment
3. Establish current compensation and benefits that deviate materially from the geographical or professional market for the skills employed, except where such a standard is demonstrably exploitive or inadequate
4. Create obligations over a longer term than revenues can be safely projected—in no event longer than one year—and in all events subject to losses in revenue

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-F: Financial Activities and Condition**

*With respect to the actual, ongoing financial conditions and activities, the GM shall not cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or material deviation of actual expenditures from Board priorities established in Ends policies.*

The GM will not:

1. Incur debt other than trade payables or other reasonable and customary liabilities incurred in the ordinary course of doing business
2. Use restricted funds for any purpose other than that required by the restriction
3. Allow liquidity, or the ability to meet cash needs in a timely and efficient fashion, to be insufficient
4. Fail to settle contracts, payroll, loans or other financial obligations in other than a timely manner
5. Allow tax payments or other government-ordered payments or filings to be overdue or inaccurately filed
6. Allow operations to generate an inadequate net income

7. Fail to generate sufficient owner equity  
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8. Acquire, encumber, or dispose of real estate
9. Allow financial record keeping systems to be inadequate or out of conformity with GAAP (generally accepted accounting practices)

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-G: Planning**

*The GM may not cause or allow planning to deviate materially from the Board's Ends priorities, risk financial jeopardy, or fail to be derived from a strategic long-term plan.*

The GM will not cause or allow plans that:

1. Omit credible projection of revenues and expenses, separation of capital and operational items, cash flow, and disclosure of planning assumptions
2. Contain insufficient information to support assumptions
3. Are not updated at least annually
4. Do not protect the long-term health of the Co-op as described in Financial Conditions policy
5. Do not provide for governance development (as set forth in Board process policy to be determined)
6. Leave the Co-op unprepared for loss of key management personnel

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-H: Asset Protection**

*The GM shall not allow assets to be unprotected, unreasonably risked, or inadequately maintained.*

The General Manager will not allow:

1. Inadequate security of premises and property

2. Uncontrolled purchasing or purchasing subject to conflicts of interest

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3. Lack of due diligence in contracts and real estate acquisitions
4. Equipment and facilities to be uninsured, inadequately insured, or otherwise unable to be replaced if damaged or destroyed (including coverage for any losses incurred due to business interruption)
5. Unnecessary exposure to liability or lack of insurance protection from claims of liability
6. Data, intellectual property, or files to be unprotected from loss, theft, or significant damage
7. Damage to the Co-op's goodwill, its public image, its credibility, or its ability to accomplish Ends

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-I: Emergency GM Succession**

*To protect the Board from sudden loss of GM services, the GM shall not permit there to be fewer than two other managers sufficiently familiar with Board and GM issues and processes to enable either to take over with reasonable proficiency as an interim successor.*

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-J: Communication and Support to the Board**

*The GM shall not cause or allow the Board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.*

The GM will not:

1. Neglect to submit monitoring data required by the Board (see policy II-E on monitoring GM performance) in a timely, accurate, and understandable fashion, directly addressing the provisions of Board policies being monitored
2. Fail to report in a timely manner any actual or anticipated noncompliance with any policy of the Board

3. Allow the Board to be unaware of relevant trends, public events of the Co-op, or internal and external changes which affect the assumptions upon which Board policy has previously been submitted
4. Fail to advise the Board if, in the GM's opinion, the Board is not in compliance with its own policies on Governance Process and Board-Management Delegation, particularly in the case of Board behavior that is detrimental to the work relationship between the Board and the GM
5. Present information in unnecessarily complex or lengthy form
6. Fail to supply for the Board's consent agenda, all decisions delegated to the GM yet required by law, regulation, or contract, to be Board-approved

**POLICY TYPE: Executive Limitations**

**POLICY TITLE: I-K: Board Logistical Support**

*The General Manager will not allow the Board to have inadequate logistical support, nor provide the Board with insufficient staff administration for support of governance activities and Board communication.*

## **POLICY TYPE II: BOARD MANAGEMENT DELEGATION**

**POLICY TYPE: Board Management Delegation**

**POLICY TITLE: II-A: Global Governance-Management Connection**

*The Board's sole official connection to the operational organization, its achievements, and its conduct, will be through the General Manager.*

**POLICY TYPE: Board Management Delegation**

**POLICY TITLE: II-B: Unity of Control**

*Only officially passed motions of the Board are binding on the GM.*

Accordingly:

1. Decisions or instructions of individual Board members, officers, or committees, are not binding on the GM except in rare instances when the Board has specifically authorized such exercise of authority.
2. In the case of Board members or committees requesting information or assistance without Board authorization, the GM can refuse such requests that require, in the GM's opinion, a material amount of staff time or funds or is disruptive.

**POLICY TYPE: Board Management Delegation**

**POLICY TITLE: II-C: Accountability of the GM**

*The GM is the Board's only link to operational achievement and conduct, so that all authority and accountability of staff, as far as the Board is concerned, is considered the authority and accountability of the GM.*

Accordingly:

1. The Board will never give instructions to persons who report directly or indirectly to the GM.

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2. The Board will not evaluate, either formally or informally, any staff other than the GM.
3. The Board will view GM performance as identical to organizational performance so that organizational accomplishment of Board-stated Ends Policies and compliance with Board-stated Executive Limitations policies will be viewed as successful GM performance.

**POLICY TYPE: Board-Management Delegation**

**POLICY TITLE: II-D: Delegation to the GM**

*The Board will instruct the GM through written policies that prescribe the organizational ends to be achieved and describe organizational situations and actions to be avoided, allowing the GM to use any reasonable interpretation of these policies.*

Accordingly:

1. The Board will develop policies instructing the GM to achieve specified results for specified recipients at a specified cost. These policies will be developed systematically from the broadest, most general level to more defined levels, and will be called “Ends” policies. All issues that are not Ends issues as defined here are Means issues.
2. The Board will develop policies that limit the latitude the GM may exercise in choosing the Organizational Means. These policies will be developed systematically from the broadest, most general level to more defined levels, and they will be called Executive Limitations policies. The Board will never prescribe Organizational Means delegated to the GM.
3. As long as the GM uses any reasonable interpretation of the Board’s Ends and Executive Limitations policies, the GM is authorized to establish all further policies, make all decisions, take all actions, establish all practices, and pursue all activities. Such decisions of the GM shall have full force and authority as if decided by the Board.
4. The Board may change its Ends and Executive Limitations policies, thereby shifting the boundary between Board and GM domains. By doing so, the

Board changes the latitude of choice given to the GM. But as long as any particular delegation is in place, the Board will respect and support the GM's choices.

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**POLICY TYPE: Board-Management Delegation**

**POLICY TITLE: II-E: Monitoring GM Performance**

*Systematic and rigorous monitoring of GM job performance will be solely against the only expected GM job outputs: organizational accomplishment of Board policies on Ends and organizational operation within the boundaries established in Board policies on Executive Limitations.*

Accordingly:

1. Monitoring is simply to determine the degree to which Board policies are being met. Information that does not do this will not be considered to be monitoring information.
2. The Board will acquire monitoring information by one or more of three methods: (a.) by internal report, in which the GM discloses interpretations and compliance information to the Board; (b.) by external report, in which an external, disinterested third party selected by the board assesses compliance with Board policies; or (c.) by direct Board inspection, in which a designated member or members of the Board assess compliance with the appropriate policy criteria.
3. In every case, the Board will judge (a.) the reasonableness of the GM's interpretation and (b.) whether data demonstrate accomplishment of the interpretation.
4. In every case, the standard for compliance shall be any reasonable GM interpretation of the Board policy being monitored. The Board is the final arbiter of reasonableness but will always judge with a "reasonable person" test rather than with interpretations favored by Board members or by the Board as a whole.
5. All policies that instruct the GM will be monitored at a frequency and by a method chosen by the Board. The Board can monitor any policy at any time by any method but will ordinarily follow the schedule outlined in the Board Annual Calendar.
6. The Board's annual evaluation of the General Manager, based on a summary of monitoring reports received from January 1 through December 31, will be completed by May 31. The Board will make its decisions concerning the

evaluation, the employment contract, and compensation adjustment no later than July 31.

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## **POLICY TYPE III: GOVERNANCE PROCESS**

**POLICY TYPE:**                    **Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE:**                **III-A: Global Governance Commitment**

*The purpose of the Board, on behalf of our owners, is to see to it that our co-op (A) achieves appropriate results for appropriate persons at an appropriate cost (as specified in Board Ends policies) and (B) avoids unacceptable actions and situations (as prohibited in Board Executive Limitations policies).*

**POLICY TYPE:**                    **Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE:**                **III-B Governing Style**

*The Board will govern lawfully, observing the principles of the Policy Governance model, with an emphasis on (a) outward vision rather than an internal preoccupation, (b) encouragement of diversity in viewpoints, (c) strategic leadership more than administrative detail, (d) clear distinction of Board and Chief Executive roles, (e) collective rather than individual decisions, (f) future rather than past or present, and (g) proactivity rather than reactivity.*

Accordingly:

1. The Board will cultivate a sense of group responsibility. The Board will be responsible for excellence in governing and be the initiator of policy. The Board will not use the expertise of individual members to substitute for the judgement of the Board, although the expertise of individual members may be used to enhance the understanding of the Board as a body.
2. The Board will direct, control, and inspire the organization through the careful establishment of broad written policies reflecting the Board's values and perspectives. The Board's major policy focus will be on the intended long-term impacts outside the staff organization, not on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining those effects.
3. The Board will enforce upon itself whatever discipline is needed to govern with excellence. Discipline will apply to matters such as attendance, preparation for meetings,

policymaking principles, respect of roles, and ensuring the continuance of governance capability. Although the Board can change its Governance Process policies at any time, it will scrupulously observe those currently in force.

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4. Continual Board development will include orientation of new Board members in the Board's Governance Process and periodic Board discussion of process improvement.

5. The Board will allow no officer, individual, or committee of the Board to hinder or serve as an excuse for not fulfilling group obligations.

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-C: Board Job Products**

*The job of the Board is to represent the member-owners in ensuring appropriate organizational performance.*

Accordingly, the Board has direct responsibility to create:

1. The linkage between the ownership and the operational organization
2. Written governing policies that realistically address the broadest levels of all organizational decisions and situations
  - a. Ends: organizational products, impacts, benefits, outcomes, recipients, and their relative worth (what good for which recipients at what cost)
  - b. Executive Limitations: constraints on executive authority that establish the prudence and ethics boundaries within which all executive activity and decisions must take place
  - c. Governance Process: specification of how the Board conceives, carries out, and monitors its own task
  - d. Board-Management Delegation: how power is delegated and its proper use; the GM's role, authority, and accountability
3. Assurance of successful organizational performance on Ends and Executive Limitations (2a and 2b above); and assurance of Board performance (2c and 2d above).

4. A Board that can continue to lead into the future, using as our tools: recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development, including monitoring and self-evaluation.

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**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-D: Agenda Planning**

*To accomplish its job products with a governance style consistent with Board policies, the Board will follow an annual agenda that (A) completes a re-exploration of Ends policies annually and (B) continually improves Board performance through Board education and enriched input and deliberation.*

Accordingly:

1. The Board's annual governance cycle will run from January 1 to December 31.
2. The cycle will start with the Board's development of its agenda for the next year.
  - a. Consultations with selected groups in the ownership, or other methods of gaining ownership input, will be determined and arranged in the first quarter, to be held during the balance of the year
  - b. Governance education and education related to Ends determination will be planned in the first quarter, to be held during the balance of the year
3. Throughout the year, the Board will attend to consent agenda items as expeditiously as possible.
4. The Board will limit the amount of meeting time taken up by monitoring reports, discouraging discussion unless the reports indicate policy violations, or the policy criteria themselves need review.
5. The Board will create and modify as necessary an annual calendar that includes the items mentioned in this policy, membership meetings, Board training schedule, monitoring schedule, and the GM evaluation and compensation decisions as outlined in Policy "Monitoring GM Performance", II-E.

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-E: Board Meetings**

*Board meetings are for the task of getting the Board's job done.*

Accordingly:

1. Meetings will be open to the membership except when executive session is officially called.
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2. Directors may request an executive session but:
    - a. The purpose of the session must be stated
    - b. The Board may include no one else or anyone else it chooses
    - c. Authority to declare the session is the President's unless overridden by a simple majority
    - d. When possible, announcement of the executive session should be on the published agenda
  3. Meeting discussion content will only be those issues which, according to Board policy, clearly belong to the Board to decide, rather than the General Manager.
  4. Deliberation will be timely, fair, orderly and thorough, but also efficient, limited to time and kept to the point.
  5. Meetings are chaired by the President. A relaxed version of Robert's Rules of Order is observed except where the Board has superseded them with policy statements. Minutes will be recorded.
  6. The agenda is set by the Board President. Any Director may add or delete items from the agenda, subject to majority agreement. To request addition of an item to the printed agenda, the Board President will be contacted in a timely manner.
  7. Only issues within the Board's responsibilities may consume meeting time.

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-F: President's Role**

*The President ensures the integrity of the board's process and, secondarily, occasionally represents the Board to outside parties.*

Accordingly:

1. The assigned result of the Chief Governing Officer's (CGO) job is that the Board behaves consistently with its own rules and those legitimately imposed on it from outside the organization.

2. The authority of the CGO consists in making decisions that fall within topics covered by Board policies on Governance Process and Board-Management Delegation, with exception of (a) employment or termination of a GM and (b) areas where the Board specifically delegates portions of this authority to others. The CGO is authorized to use any reasonable interpretation of the provisions in these policies.

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3. The president has the following specific duties:
  - a. The CGO is empowered to chair board meetings
  - b. The CGO has no authority to make decisions about policies created by the Board within Ends and Executive Limitations policy areas. Therefore, the CGO has no authority to supervise or direct the GM
  - c. The CGO may represent the Board to outside parties in announcing Board-stated positions and in stating chair decisions and interpretations within the area delegated to her or him
  - d. The CGO may delegate this authority but remains accountable for its use
  - e. The CGO ensures that other Board officers and directors carry out their duties

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-G: Vice-President's Role**

*The Vice-President's role is to help the Board maintain the relationship between the Board and the Member-owners.*

Accordingly:

1. The Vice-President will ensure that the election and referenda process follows the Board's policies.
2. The Vice-President will be the liaison between the Board and the GM to ensure that all special events like Member Meetings are structured in a way that helps the Board do its work.
3. In accordance with our bylaws, the Vice-President will perform the duties of the President in her/his absence.

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TYPE: III-H: Treasurer's Role**

*The Treasurer's role is to help ensure that the Board creates and follows good policy relating to the financial condition of the cooperative and the Board itself.*

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Accordingly,

- 1 The Treasurer will create and monitor the Board's (not the co-op's) budget in accordance with policy III-M.
- 2 The treasurer will chair any committee charged with researching financial policies, or with hiring an auditor.

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-I: Secretary's Role**

*The Secretary's role is to ensure the integrity of the Board's documents.*

Accordingly

1. The Secretary will ensure that all board documents and filings are timely and accurate.
  - a. The Secretary will act as the Board's liaison with the Board Administrator by (1) assuring that all meeting minutes are accurate and well-formatted; and (2) assuring that all Board documents (electronic and paper) are safely archived for an appropriate length of time
  - b. The Secretary will assure that the policy register is updated to reflect changes approved by the Board; that policies are coherent and adhere to the Policy Governance model; and that the latest electronic and print version is distributed to the Board members and the GM
2. In accordance with our bylaws, the Secretary will certify by her/his signature the results of voting in all elections and referenda put to the membership of the Co-op.

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-J: Board Members' Code of Conduct**

*The Board commits itself and its members to ethical, businesslike, and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as Board members.*

Accordingly:

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1. Members must demonstrate loyalty to the ownership, unconflicted by loyalties to staff, other organizations, or any personal interests as consumers.
2. Members must avoid conflict of interest with respect to their fiduciary responsibility.
  - a. There will be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any Board member and the organization except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity, and equal access to “inside” information
  - b. When the Board is to decide on an issue about which a member has an unavoidable conflict of interest, that member shall absent himself/herself without comment not only from the vote but also from the deliberation
3. Board members may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the organization.
  - a. Members’ interactions with the GM or with staff must recognize the lack of authority vested in individuals except when explicitly authorized by the Board
  - b. Members’ interactions with the public, the press, or other entities must recognize the same limitation, and the inability of any Board member to speak for the Board except to repeat explicitly stated Board decisions
  - c. Except for participation in Board deliberation about whether the GM has achieved any reasonable interpretation of Board policy, members will not express individual judgments of performance of employees or the GM
4. Members will respect the confidentiality appropriate to issues of a sensitive nature.
5. Members will be properly prepared for Board deliberation.
6. Members will support the legitimacy and authority of the Board’s decision on any matter, irrespective of the member’s personal position on the issue.

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-K: Board Committee Principles**

*Board committees, when used, will be assigned so as to reinforce the wholeness of the Board's job and so as never to interfere with delegation from Board to GM.*

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Accordingly:

1. Board committees are to help the Board do its job, not to help or advise the staff. Committees ordinarily will assist the Board by preparing policy alternatives and implications for Board deliberation.
2. Board committees may not speak or act for the Board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes. Expectations and authority will be carefully stated in order not to conflict with authority delegated to the GM.
3. Board committees cannot exercise authority over staff. Because the GM works for the full Board, he or she will not be required to obtain the approval of a Board committee before an executive action.
4. Committees will be used sparingly and ordinarily in an ad hoc capacity.
5. This policy applies to any group that is formed by Board action, whether or not it is called a committee and regardless of whether the group includes Board members. It does not apply to committees formed under the authority of the GM.
6. Board committee responsibilities (product and authority) are established in a written committee charter created and controlled by the Board.

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-L: Board Committee Structure**

*A committee is a Board committee only if its existence and charge come from the Board, regardless of whether Board members sit on the committee. Unless otherwise stated, a committee ceases to exist as soon as its task is complete.*

**POLICY TYPE: Governance Process**

**POLICY TITLE: III-M: Governance Investment**

*The board will invest in its governance capacity.*

Accordingly:

1. Board skills, methods, and supports will be sufficient to ensure governing with excellence.
  - a. Training and retraining will be used liberally to orient new members and candidates for membership, as well as to maintain and increase existing member skills and understandings
  - b. Outside monitoring assistance, including but not limited to financial audits, will be arranged if, in the Board's opinion, any circumstances deem them necessary, so that the Board can exercise confident control over organizational performance
  - c. Outreach mechanisms will be used as needed to ensure the Board's ability to listen to owner viewpoints and values
2. Costs will be prudently incurred, though not at the expense of endangering the development and maintenance of superior capability.
3. The Board will establish its cost of governance budget for each fiscal year.

## **POLICY TYPE IV: ENDS**

**POLICY TYPE: Ends**

**POLICY TITLE: IV:  
Global Ends**

**Roanoke Natural Food Co-Op exists to create a vibrant, local and sustainable cooperative community where decisions are grounded in the balance of economic, social and environmental responsibilities.**

### **Sub-Ends**

#### **Economy**

- a. Members benefit from the well-being and profitability of RNFC.
- b. Local producers, businesses and the community at large benefit from the presence and investment of RNFC.

#### **Health**

The community has access to a selection of high quality, organic, and healthful foods and products which are reasonably priced.

#### **Community**

- a. Community members have a welcoming and vital marketplace.
- b. Owners have a sense of pride of ownership and belonging.
- c. RNFC serves as a catalyst for community involvement in positive social change and social justice.
- d. Local and global communities are strengthened by a preference for fair trade products and services.
- e. Larger cooperative family bonds are strengthened.

#### **Environment**

- a. Sustainable environmental practices are linked to RNFC goods and services.
- b. The natural environment is protected by use of green technologies and energy alternatives.

**Education**

The cooperative community is informed about:

- a. Nutrition and health
- b. The Cooperative Business Model and cooperative principles
- c. The RNFC mission and ends
- d. Sustainable living

**Agriculture**

- a. RNFC consistently offers food products that are fresh, local, organic, sustainably-raised, non-GMO, humanely-raised, and cruelty-free.
- b. Farmland conservation and sustainable farming methods are supported.