

About your *Michigan* Membership in the Keweenaw Co-op

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did we reincorporate in Michigan?

Incorporation of the Co-op under Michigan instead of Ohio law was necessary to raise and secure funding for the Relocation and Expansion plans. (We were incorporated in Ohio due to favorable cooperative law at that time - 2010.)

Do I absolutely have to complete a new Michigan Membership Agreement?

No. All Michigan-based rules and conditions will automatically apply to your Membership even if you do not complete a new agreement. However, you must complete the new agreement if:

- You wish to name somebody as a true “joint owner” of your membership. Your current “Other Household Adult” is not a true joint owner and has no member/owner rights.
- You are willing to give us legal permission to communicate official membership business with you via email or other electronic means.
- You wish to name a beneficiary for your Membership and Member Capital.

To start the process, complete this [Membership Agreement Update Form](#).

Why would I want to agree to electronic communications?

It is a “greener” and faster option than regular U.S. Mail, some find it more convenient, and it saves us the cost of labor, paper processing, and postage.

To start the process, complete this [Membership Agreement Update Form](#).

Why would I want to name a Joint Member?

Memberships established prior to Michigan Incorporation allow only ONE person to be the legal owner of the Membership. While most of our members have another name associated with their Membership (designated as “Other Household Adult”), that designation is not legal ownership of the Membership and its associated capital, provides no rights of Membership, and does not allow continuity of Membership if the legally designated Member dies. Designating your “Other Household Adult” or some other person as a “Joint Holder” of your membership assures a seamless continuity of Membership for both holders. One Member will still be designated as “primary” for the purpose of voting communications and similar official purposes.

To start the process, complete this [Membership Agreement Update Form](#).

Can anyone be a joint owner with me, or do we have to live in the same household or be related?

Yes, *anyone* can be your joint owner so long as they are 18 years old, not already a Co-op owner, and you both sign Exhibit C for Joint Ownership. *Benefits* of Membership are intended for the Joint Owners and other members of their households and families, as defined in Section 4.1 of the Membership Agreement.

To start the process, complete this [Membership Agreement Update Form](#).

Why would I complete Exhibit D to name a beneficiary?

You may have a person who you would like to see inherit your Co-op Capital and continue your Membership. Without a beneficiary or joint owner, your Capital becomes part of your “estate” and has to be handled accordingly.

To start the process, complete this [Membership Agreement Update Form](#).

Is my spouse automatically a joint owner or a beneficiary?

No. Joint Ownership is not automatic and can only be established by completing the Membership Agreement Exhibit C for Joint Ownership. Beneficiaries can only be named by completing the Membership Agreement Exhibit D.

To start the process, complete this [Membership Agreement Update Form](#).

I'm paid in full or current with my payment plan – Do I have to pay more now or fill out Exhibit B for payment?

No. As an established Co-op member, you are all set. Only new members fill out Exhibit B.

What is the “Initial Owner Investment?”

Members who joined under Ohio incorporation were required to purchase a \$200 common share to become a Co-op owner. Michigan law does not allow for common shares of Co-ops but instead for an initial capital contribution, which we refer to as the “Initial Owner Investment.” The Michigan re-incorporation automatically converted Member’s common share capital into their “Initial Owner Investment” (either in full or in the amount currently accumulated under a payment plan).

What is this new “Membership Certificate” that I received or heard about?

Michigan law requires Co-ops to issue a “Membership Certificate” to all Members who have fully paid their Initial Owner Investment, and requires that the Certificate list various aspects of Member rights and responsibilities. Members who are on payment plans for their Initial Owner Investment will receive their Membership Certificates once they are fully vested, and we are issuing Certificates starting with Members who recently joined under the new Michigan incorporation and then moving on to those who became Members during the Ohio incorporation.

How can I pay off the rest of my Membership Payment Plan?

You can pay off your balance or make an extra installment payment at any register. If you want to mail a check, please contact ownerservices@keweenaw.coop for balance information.

What is the difference between “Owner” and “Member.”

The *only* difference between the two terms is that “Member” is the official *legal* term used by the State of Michigan. Therefore, in legally sensitive contexts you will always see the term “Member” used. Otherwise you may see either one used interchangeably. We prefer the term “Owner” to emphasize that the Co-op is owned by its Membership and ownership comes with rights and responsibilities not always afforded by mere membership.

When is all this Relocation/Reincorporation rigamarole going to end?

As soon as possible! Reincorporation was necessary for us to finance the relocation project, but we are hopeful that the new Membership Agreement will be the last thing we have to badger Members about. However, as your elected representatives, the Board of Directors will continue to communicate with Membership about the direction and priorities of the Co-op and important Member business.

How do I update my Owner contact info?

You can update your contact information in person at the store or [Customer/Owner Contact Info Form](#).

Do I still get a Patronage Refund?

Yes. There are no changes to Membership rights and benefits, including voting, patronage refunds, case order discounts, Owner-only pricing, etc.

Can the “other household member” become the primary owner for the Membership?

Yes, but first that person has to become a Joint Owner of the Membership by completing Exhibit C. Then both Owners need to fill out a new Membership Agreement with the desired primary holder (previous household adult) signing the main agreement and the previous primary holder completing Exhibit C to be the new joint owner.

What if I have questions not answered here or need information about my ownership?

Please contact Owner Services at ownerservices@keweenaw.coop - we will be happy to help!