

COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE RESEARCH INITIATIVE
2022 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Consent

Thanks again for being part of the Cooperative Governance Research Initiative (CGRI) survey and taking the time to talk with me today. Before we get started, let's review the consent information I emailed you in advance and confirm we're on the same page.

Did you have a chance to review the consent form?

Do you have any questions?

Is it okay to quote you directly without using your name or your co-op's name?

[walk through consent information sheet together and answer any questions, then secure verbal consent and begin recording]

Opening questions

As you know, the goal of CGRI is to generate data and evidence-based tools that cooperatives can use to advance their governance practices. The first phase of the research was the survey you completed last fall. These follow-up interviews are a chance to dive into the stories behind the standard questionnaire. Then later there will be a chance for you to ask questions you might have of us. Does that sound good?

So tell me – why did you respond to the survey?

Why did you volunteer for a follow-up interview?

What are your hopes for this research and the impact it will have?

Board composition

In the survey, you told us you are [not at all/slightly/somewhat/very/extremely] confident that the board has the right mix of people to perform its governance duties effectively.

Tell me more about that. Can you walk me through your thinking in answering that question?

What does having the right mix of people on the board mean to you?

How does your cooperative actually go about getting the right mix of people on the board?

[probe for stories and examples about board recruitment, nominations, diversity, outside directors, terms, and attributes of successful directors]

Board culture

Another survey question asked about how the board builds social and interpersonal dynamics that support it in its governance effectiveness, and you said your board does this [not at all/slightly/somewhat/very/extremely] well.

Tell me more about that. What did you mean?

What kinds of dynamics between board members do you see as most important for effective governance?

Why?

How does your board develop these dynamics?

[probe for stories and examples about board onboarding, training, culture, and healthy dissent]

Strategic orientation of the board

In the survey, I noticed that you said the board has spent [none/very little/some/most] proportion of its time in board meetings on strategy in the past year – and that ideally you think strategy should occupy [none/very little/some/most] of the board's meeting time.

Can you walk me through your thinking there?

From your perspective, what [does/would] it take to bring the board's actual and ideal focus on strategy into alignment?

[probe for stories and examples about board's understanding of its role in relation to management]

Board-CEO relationship

Going back to your survey responses, you said that the board strikes an appropriate balance between supporting and challenging the CEO [not at all/slightly/somewhat/very/extremely] well.

Why?

What does that balance mean to you?

How do you see your role in achieving that balance?

[probe for stories and examples about board-CEO relationship]

Board-member relationship

In the survey, you told us that board members understand the needs of members [not at all/slightly/somewhat/very/extremely] well.

Why? Tell me more about that.

How do you know that member needs are understood by the board?

Can you describe some of the concrete ways the board hears about member needs and how they change over time?

[probe for stories and examples about member voice e.g. member participation via voting in board elections and attending member meetings, surveys, listening sessions, member committees, community events, etc.]

Cooperative performance

Thanks again for taking the time to talk with me. I just have a couple more questions for you.

One of the things that makes research on cooperatives difficult relative to conventional firms is that it's hard to pin down exactly what "performance" means.

What do you use as key indicators of performance in your cooperative?

Why?

[probe for stories and examples about financial performance and serving members' needs]

Closing questions

If you could snap your fingers and change one thing about governance at your cooperative, what would it be?

Why?

Taking a step back, what are you most proud of about governance in your cooperative?

Why?

Is there anything you think I've missed? Are there any questions you think I should have asked you that I didn't?

What questions do you have for me?