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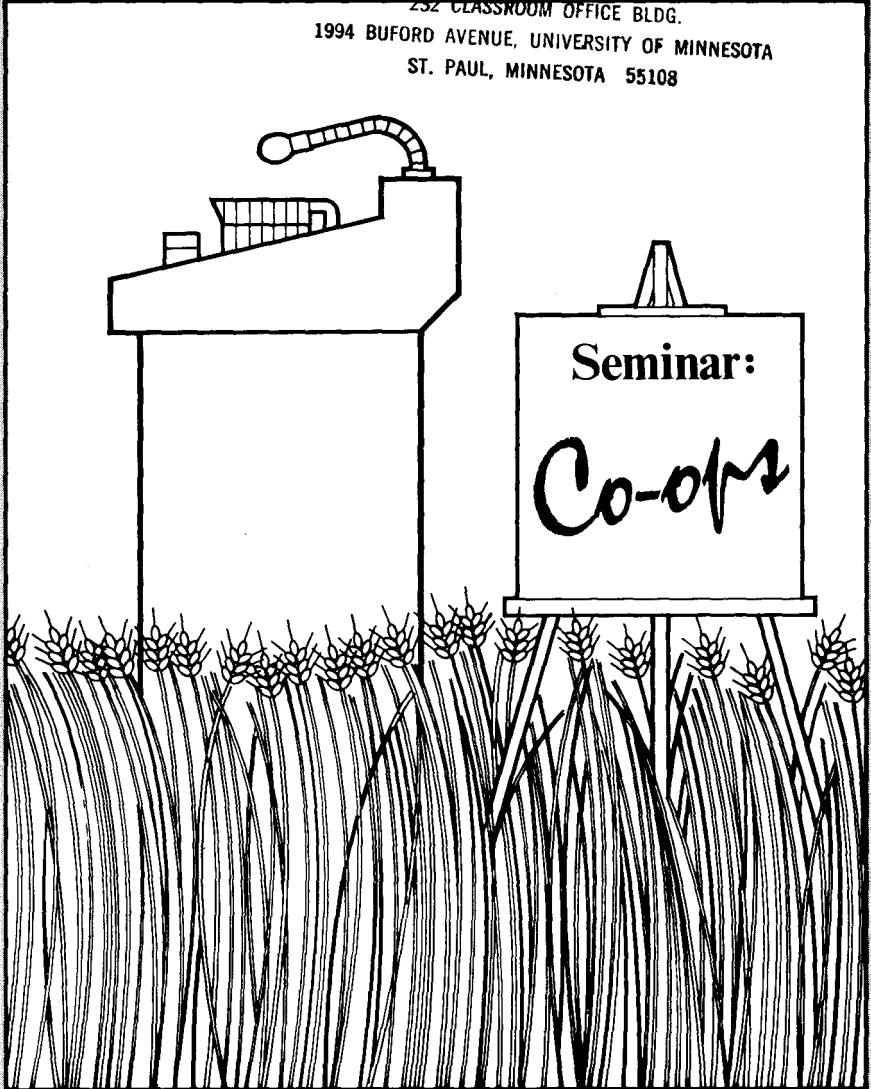
Young Member Programs for Cooperatives

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Young Member Programs for Cooperatives

Thomas P. Schomisch

Assistant Professor of Communication

University of Wisconsin-Extension

Thomas W. Gray, Rural Sociologist

Agricultural Cooperative Service

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Key words: Cooperative, young member, education, program, participation.

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Preface

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The overall objective of this study is to provide cooperative decisionmakers with effective strategies for developing young member programs in local cooperatives. To accomplish this, the study sets out to determine: (1) the range and scope of young member programs and activities utilized by a sample of local cooperatives, (2) the relationship of young member programs and activities to the legislative system of local cooperatives, (3) the factors that block integration of young member programs and activities into local cooperatives and (4) the organizing procedures that help stimulate the development of young member programs and activities. ↵

Data were collected by personal interview from nine member relations specialists, and by survey from 33 local cooperative managers and seven dairy cooperatives. This study was funded by Agricultural Cooperative Service and University Center for Cooperatives, University of Wisconsin-Extension Madison.

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Highlights

- Regional cooperative member relations specialists reported most managers noticed an immediate patronage increase from young members who have participated in local and regional cooperative programs. Their young members asked more questions and were more likely to attend annual meetings. Also, cooperative members tended to elect participants in young member programs to the board of directors.

- The three leading factors of successful local cooperative young member programs were (1) a manager strongly committed to the long-term value of a program, (2) use of an advisory group to establish and guide the program, and (3) frequent opportunities for young members to ask questions and suggest changes.

- The top three factors leading to failure of young member programs were (1) managers primarily interested in the programs as merchandising ploys, (2) lack of young member involvement in designing programs and activities, and (3) emphasis on product and service promotion rather than basic cooperative topics.

- Local cooperative managers felt members participating in young member programs tended to be better informed and more supportive of the cooperative. They said these younger members were more likely to vote at the annual meeting and were more loyal even when competitors offered better prices.

- The cooperative received good value for time and money invested in the programs and activities. Most managers felt their program did not represent a threat to their directors.

- Longer established young member programs (5 or more years of continuous programs) involved an average of 87 participants in 1982. Emerging young member programs (up to 5 years of programs) attracted an average of 35 people to their events.

- Cooperatives with emerging young member programs averaged \$5.6 million in sales and served an average of 1,156 members. Cooperatives with established programs averaged sales of \$22.9 million and served an average of 2,082 members.

- Established programs reported 36 percent of current directors had participated in the cooperative's young member program. Fourteen percent of directors of cooperatives with emerging programs had participated in young member programs.

- Cooperatives with more established programs offered a regular seminar series to acquaint a new group of young members with the cooperative each year, 1-day sessions for all young members, tours of local and regional cooperative facilities, and sponsorship of young members to events presented by regional cooperatives, cooperative councils, and national organizations.

- Sixty percent of local cooperatives established young farmer or young couple leadership groups. These groups averaged about 10 young people. The leadership groups met about nine times a year in established programs and about twice a year in the emerging programs. Most served on an advisory committee for the board of directors.

Young Member Programs for Cooperatives

Thomas P. Schomisch and Thomas W. Gray¹

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

In the past two decades, a growing number of agricultural cooperatives have attempted to develop programs to involve younger members in their organizations. Some of the attempts have matured into successful programs. Many members have been motivated to seek leadership positions on committees and the board of directors for their cooperatives. Other members have increased their patronage.

In a member loyalty study of three large dairy cooperatives, Cook found that members who had been or were active in young cooperator programs were unusually loyal to their cooperative (1, p. 4).² He found these members, 18 percent of respondents, assigned a significantly higher monetary value to membership services in the dairy cooperative than did other members. Cook also reported these members purchased a larger share of feed and fertilizer from their supply cooperative.

In a study of cooperative councils, council secretaries noted early patronage increases by participating young members. They also pointed out that during conferences, young couples often want discussions with decisionmakers. As a result, cooperative leaders receive grassroots feedback that may be helpful in determining services young farmers desire (4, p. 43).

¹Assistant Professor of Communication, University of Wisconsin-Extension and Rural Sociologist, Agricultural Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, respectively.

²Italicized numbers in parentheses refer to the References at the end of the report.

Johnson analyzed two case situations of local cooperatives that had developed young member programs. When asked to evaluate the results of the programs, one of the local manager commented, "When I see these people coming back and continuing to do business with the cooperative, and showing more of an interest in the cooperative, I feel the programs have been extremely good for us." Another manager agreed increased sales were rewarding, but also noted, "It is very encouraging to see the participants of the program coming in and paying their bill on time." This manager further stated: "The young farmers in our program may not all want to become directors but they will certainly be more intelligent when it comes to voting for directors of the cooperatives (3, p. 284).

This work specifies various options in designing young member programs and evaluates their effectiveness and costs.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this research is to provide local cooperative decisionmakers with effective strategies for developing their own young member programs. To accomplish this, the study sets out to determine: (1) the range and scope of young member programs and activities utilized by a sample of local cooperatives, (2) the relationship of young member programs and activities to the legislative system of local cooperatives, (3) the factors that block integration of young member programs and activities into local cooperatives, and (4) the organizing procedures that help stimulate the development of young member programs and activities. Funds for the research were provided in part by the Agricultural Cooperatives Service and the University Center for Cooperatives, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Madison. Data were collected by the University Center.

METHODOLOGY

In identifying the sample and collecting the data, the authors relied on a reputational endorsement methodology. Personnel at the American Institute of Cooperatives (AIC) were asked to identify member relations specialists they considered leaders in providing educational programs for young members.

Nine specialists from four regional agricultural cooperatives were selected and personally interviewed. There interviews were conducted with two purposes in mind: (1) to gain insights into the character of these programs and (2) to identify a sample of local cooperatives that had provided

programs and activities for young members. The specialists were asked to differentiate between relatively new programs and well-established ones. On the basis of their identification a total of 40 local cooperatives were identified, sent questionnaires, and asked to describe their programs. Questions covered program content, development, and impact as well as factors related to program success and failure. To assist readers in making comparisons with their own cooperative organizations, descriptive information on sales volume and number of members was also solicited from the participating cooperatives.

Because dairy cooperatives have had a long history of very successful young member programs, 10 member cooperatives of a national dairy federation were surveyed as benchmarks for comparison with the locals. Thirty-three of the forty locals and seven of the dairy cooperative managers returned completed questionnaires.

YOUNG MEMBER EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Mail Survey Results

Each of the local cooperatives reported providing members farm supplies, related services, and a market for grain products. Of the 33 responding to the survey, 9 have provided members with educational and leadership programs 5 or more years. Experience of these cooperatives ranged from 5 to 15 years and averaged 10.5 years of continuous activities and programs for young members. These nine cooperatives are referred to in this report as local cooperative with *established* young member programs. The remaining 24 local cooperatives reported 1 to 3 years of experience in providing young member programs. These cooperatives are referred to as local cooperatives with *emerging* young member programs.

The local cooperatives operate in nine different States, predominantly in the Corn Belt, Lake States, and Northern Plains.

The dairy cooperatives responding to the survey are headquartered in Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Each reported bargaining for milk prices, and processing and marketing dairy products for their members. Their respective procurement areas varied from parts of a few States to an average of 14 States. All have established young member programs, with one cooperative having as few as 5 years of experience and another as many as 21 years. They average 14.5 years of continuous young member programs.

Table 1 compares the sales volume and membership size of the three categories of cooperatives: 24 local cooperatives with emerging (less than 5 years old) young member programs, 9 local cooperatives with established (5 or more years old) young member programs, 7 dairy cooperatives with established (5 or more years old) young member programs.

In comparing the local cooperatives for 1982, those with established young member programs averaged \$22.9 million in annual sales, some \$17.3 million more than cooperatives with emerging programs. They served an average of 2,082 members, or 926 (44 percent) more members on average than cooperatives with less than 5 years' experience with young member programs. The dairy cooperatives in the study are much larger. Their sales volumes averaged \$759.7 million and they served an average of 7,798 members.

Educational Programs

The cooperatives reported offering educational programs ranging from a four-session seminar for new young members to annual 1-day events for all young members.

In all cases, the educational programs were designed for young members through age 35. Thirteen cooperatives limited participation in educational events to members through age 35 by special invitation only. Local cooperatives averaged about 37 young members for their educational events. Dairy cooperatives drew an average of 484 people for their sessions (table 1). Dairy cooperatives, as expected, reported having much larger programs. One local with an emerging program had as many as 200 members participate.

Table 1 — Young members participating in educational programs presented by cooperative

Young member participants	Emerging young member programs (24)	Established young member programs (9)	Established dairy cooperative programs (7)
<i>Number</i>			
Average number of members participating	40	32	484
Range of members participating	15 to 200	12 to 50	40 to 1,850

Seminar Series—Twenty-two of the local cooperatives reported using an outline suggested by their regional cooperative to design a three or four-part educational series for young members. The seminars were presented by the president of the board of directors, general manager, and a regional cooperative representative. Some of the sessions included reports and discussions of young couple attendance at educational events sponsored by other organizations.

In cooperatives where advisory committees of young members were elected or appointed, these young leaders helped plan and present the seminars.

The seminars were scheduled at times of the year when farmers and ranchers were least involved in crop activities, particularly January through March. The sessions were usually held in the evening.

One-Day Events—Sixteen local cooperatives offered special daytime educational events open to all young members. New topics were developed each year. Young member advisory committees worked with management to select topics, speakers, and meeting format, and often presided at the sessions. The 1-day events were usually open to nonmember guests.

Topics covered—Table 2 shows how often certain topics are covered at the various educational programs. All topics listed are covered by more than half of the cooperatives in the study. The least frequently covered area was “Member Representation in Cooperative Affairs.” While six of the seven dairy cooperatives covered this issue, less than one-half of the local cooperatives reported including it in their programs. Dairy cooperatives covered “affiliations” least often. Five of the six dairy organizations covered it. “Affiliations” was the most frequently covered item by locals.

Tours—Tours of cooperative and affiliated cooperative facilities were offered by about one-third of the cooperatives in the study. Local cooperatives with emerging programs tended to use them the least with only 4 of 24 offering the option.

At locals, tours to regional facilities were included as the final feature of the series of seminars. On site tours were frequently given during the study of the cooperative operations.

Those cooperatives providing daytime educational programs usually provided tours of local facilities as an optional feature before or after a meal and program.

Table 2—Topics covered in educational programs for young members

Topics	Emerging young member programs (24)	Established young member programs (9)	Total regional locals (33)		Established dairy co-op programs (7)		Overall	
	No.	No.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
History and development of cooperatives	15	5	20	61	6	85	26	65
Operations of cooperative	15	5	20	61	6	85	26	65
Member representation in cooperative affairs	11	5	16	48	6	85	22	55
Affiliations with other	16	7	23	70	5	57	27	68
Explanation of how cooperative is financed	13	4	17	52	6	85	23	58
Role of members, directors, and employees	15	6	21	64	6	85	27	68

Table 3—Cooperatives providing opportunities for young member feedback during education programs

Feedback opportunity for young members	Emerging young member programs (24)	Established young member programs (9)	Total regional locals (33)		Established dairy co-op programs (7)		Overall (40)	
	No.	No.	No.	Pct.	No.	No.	Pct.	
Question co-op leaders about policies and practices	14	5	19	58	7	26	65	
Suggest improvements in co-op policies and practices	17	8	25	78	7	32	80	

Feedback Opportunities—Most cooperatives reported giving young members a chance to voice their opinion during the various educational programs. All the dairy cooperatives set aside time for young members to question cooperative policies and practices as well as to suggest improvements for the future (table 3).

“Questioning co-op leaders about policies and practices” was the least likely feedback opportunity cooperatives reported offering. “Suggesting improvements” was cited in more than 70 percent of the cases.

Social Activities—Table 4 shows that most of the cooperatives provided at least one form of social activity as part of the educational events. The most popular choice was providing a meal during or after the session. Seventy-five percent of the cooperative served meals.

Sponsorship to Other Organizational Programs—Sending young members to educational conferences, workshops, seminars, regional annual meetings, and national programs augmented many local cooperative activities.

Table 5 shows that regional cooperative programs were used by 26 of the 33

Table 4—Cooperatives providing social activities for young members during education programs

Social activity	Emerging young member programs (24)		Established young member programs (8)		Established dairy co-op programs (7)		Overall (40)	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Meals	15	62	8	88	7	100	30	75
Snacks after meetings	9	37	3	33	5	71	17	42
Overnight lodging	5	20	4	44	5	71	14	35
Receptions before meetings	1	4	2	22	4	57	7	17
Dances	1	4	0	0	1	14	2	5
Athletic activities	2	8	2	22	0	0	4	10

(78 percent) local cooperatives to expand the educational opportunities for their young members. Only two of the seven dairy cooperatives in the sample sponsored members to regional cooperative programs.

All seven dairy cooperatives sponsored members to national programs—The National Milk Producers Federation Convention and The National Institute of Cooperative Education programs. Locals seldom exercised this option, with only 2 of 33 using it. Overall, 70 percent of the cooperatives budgeted funds to sponsor young member participation in the various events.

Table 6 reviews the selection methods used to sponsor members at other educational events. All the dairy cooperatives in the study asked a panel of judges to select the winning individual in a contest. Judges used entry forms and personal interviews of finalists to choose the outstanding young leaders. A trip to a national young member program was the award. “Selection by general managerial staff” was most frequently used by locals with 17 of the emerging programs using this method, 3 of the 8 established programs doing likewise. Four of the eight local cooperatives with established programs *elected* young members for attendance.

Table 5—Number of young members sponsored to educational events presented by other organizations

Events	Emerging young member programs (24)		Established young member programs (9)		Total regional locals (33)		Established dairy member program (7)		Overall (40)	
	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops	Young members Sponsoring co-ops
	<i>Number</i>									
Statewide cooperative program	8	2	21	1	29	3	76	6	105	9
Regional cooperative program	146	19	66	7	212	26	24	2	236	28
National program	2	1	0	0	2	1	128	7	130	8

Summary—Cooperatives in the study included one or more educational components in their programs for young members. Program options included annual orientation seminars for new young members, general 1-day sessions for all young members, tours of local facilities and regional cooperatives, sponsorship of young members to events presented by other cooperative organizations, and social activities.

Table 7 lists topic areas covered in these programs. Locals most frequently covered “Affiliations with other cooperatives.” Dairy cooperatives covered nearly all the topic areas reported from “Explanation of How Cooperatives Are Financed” to a “History and Development of Cooperatives.”

Feedback opportunities by members were emphasized in most activities. Cooperatives frequently augmented their own educational programs by sponsoring members to State, regional, and national cooperative programs. Members were selected to attend these programs by general managers, boards of directors, by other young members, and by member contests. In emerging programs, these individuals often formed the nucleus to help the board and management plan local events.

Leadership Activities

Cooperatives have created various leadership groups to provide involvement and development opportunities for young members. Areas addressed in this report include: how members are selected for leadership

Table 6—Method of selecting young members for sponsoring to educational events provided by other organizations

Method of selection	Emerging young member programs (22)		Established young member programs (8)		Established dairy co-ops programs (7)		Overall (37)	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
By board of directors	8	36	2	25	1	14	11	29
By general manager/staff	17	77	3	37	1	14	21	56
By other young members	4	18	4	50	0	0	8	21
Win young member contest	1	4	1	12	7	100	9	24

committees, whom the groups report to within the cooperative, how long members may serve on committees, and the types of activities in which these groups are involved.

Twenty-eight, or 70 percent, of the 40 cooperatives in the survey have young member leadership groups. Six of the dairy cooperatives have programs (all more than 5 years old) and 22 of the local cooperatives have programs—6 with established programs and 16 with emerging programs.

Member Selection—Cooperative managers reported using three different methods to form young member leadership groups. As noted in table 8 appointment by the board of directors is used in 4 of the cooperatives. The manager or staff selected the leaders in 11 and young members elected their leaders in 13 of the cooperatives. All the dairy cooperatives reported evolving to a system of young member elections. The local cooperatives, whether emerging or established programs, tended not to rely on election methods preferring to allow executive officers to make the selection.

Table 7—Topics covered in educational programs for young members

Topic	Emerging young member programs (24)		Established young member programs (9)		Total regional locals (33)		Established dairy member program (7)		Overall	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
History and development of cooperatives	15		5		20	61	6	85	26	65
Operations of cooperative	15		5		20	61	6	85	26	85
Member representation in cooperative affairs	11		5		16	48	6	85	22	55
Affiliations with other	16		7		23	70	5	57	27	68
Explanation of how cooperative is financed	13		4		17	52	6	85	23	58
Role of members, directors, and employees	15		6		21	64	6	85	26	68

Lines of Authority—Young member leadership groups reported to the board of directors in 11 of the cooperatives in the survey. Of the six dairy cooperatives with leadership activities, two made such provisions. Nine of the local cooperatives required reports to the board, five of these were established programs, and four were programs less than 3 years old.

Nine of the cooperatives in the survey, two dairy cooperatives and seven locals, allowed representatives of the leadership group to attend board of directors meetings. Four of the local groups were emerging programs and three were from programs at least 5 years old.

Length of Service—Table 9 reveals the length of term young members may serve with leadership groups. Eight of the cooperatives limited young members to 1- year terms, 11 had 2-year terms, and six provided a 3-year term. Three of the cooperatives had an unlimited number of 1-year terms through age 35. Local cooperatives tended to limit terms of service to shorter periods than dairy cooperatives.

Activities of Leadership Groups—Tables 10-12 list types of activities young leadership groups were involved in. Some of these occurred within the cooperative, others within the local community, and others beyond the local community.

Table 8—Method of forming the young member leadership group

Method of forming group	Emerging young member programs (16)	Established young member programs (6)	Established dairy co-op programs (6)	Overall (28)	
	No.	No.	No.	No.	Pct.
Appointment by board of directors	3	1	0	4	14
Selection by manager/ staff	8	3	0	11	39
Election by young members	5	2	6	13	47

Table 9—Number of years individual may serve as leader group member

Years	Emerging young member programs (16)	Established young member programs (6)	Established dairy co-op programs (6)	Overall (28)	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
One	6	2	0	8	29
Two	6	3	2	11	39
Three	2	0	4	6	22
Unlimited to age 35	2	1	0	3	10

Table 10—Activities young member leadership groups participated in with the cooperative

Activity	Emerging young member programs (16)	Established young member programs (6)	Established dairy co-op programs (6)	Overall
	<i>Number</i>			
Assistance in planning and promoting annual meeting	5	5	1	11
Contribution to co-op newsletter	4	1	3	8
Give reports on young member activities at member meetings	3	2	1	6
Serve on resolution committee	0	0	1	1
Serve on product/service advisory committees	1	0	0	1

Table 11 – Activities young member leadership groups participated in within the community

Activity	Emerging young member program (16)	Established young member programs (6)	Established dairy co-op programs (6)	Overall
<i>Number</i>				
Represent cooperative with exhibits at fairs/parades/community events	1	2	7	10
Represent co-op at youth events	5	3	4	12
Speak at civic clubs for cooperative	2	0	3	5
Consumer promotion/education	1	1	2	4

Table 12 – Activities young member leadership groups participated in beyond the community

Activity	Emerging young member programs (16)	Established young member programs (6)	Established dairy co-op programs (6)	Overall
<i>Number</i>				
Contact legislators to support cooperative positions	1	3	6	10
Testify at hearings	0	0	2	2
Provide media interviews	1	2	4	7

Activities within the cooperative: The activities young member leadership groups were involved in most often were planning, promoting, and assisting with educational programs for other young members of the cooperative. Young leaders of all the dairy cooperatives and local cooperatives with established programs were involved in these types of activities. Five of the sixteen local cooperatives with emerging programs had young members assist with education programs.

Some groups helped with annual meetings. Of the 28 cooperatives with leadership groups, young leaders in 11 assisted in planning and promoting the cooperative's annual meeting. Ten local cooperatives reported young member leaders provide such assistance. Young cooperator groups in one dairy cooperative helped plan and promote the annual meeting.

Overall, eight of the leadership groups (28 percent) provided a regular column in the cooperative newsletter. Six provided reports of young member activities at membership meetings.

Representatives of young member leadership groups served on the cooperative resolution committee in only one cooperative. The same is true of service on product/service advisory committees of the board of directors.

Activities within the community: Table 11 describes the activities young groups participated in within the communities served by cooperatives in the survey. Overall, 12 of the leadership groups represented the cooperative at youth events. These activities usually involved explaining cooperatives to a Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter meeting or agricultural class in a high school.

Ten of the leadership groups (35 percent) reported representing the cooperative in a booth at a fair or similar community event. In five of the groups, young leaders reported speaking to civic clubs about topics related to the cooperative and its products and services. In four cooperatives, leaders helped conduct consumer education programs. These programs usually covered the role of agriculture and cooperatives in the community. Dairy cooperatives tend to use exhibits and community events most frequently while locals were more apt to use youth events.

Activities beyond the local community: Young leadership groups also participated in activities beyond the community (table 12). All young cooperator groups in dairy cooperatives contacted legislators to support the position of their cooperatives. Two of these groups also had testified at Government hearings.

Four of the twenty-two local cooperative leadership groups contacted legislators. None had testified at hearings. Leadership groups also provided interviews for prints and/or broadcast media.

Summary—Twenty-eight, or 70 percent, of the responding cooperatives in the survey offered young member leadership activities. Six of the seven dairy cooperatives in the survey offered programs, 16 regional locals had emerging programs, and six had established programs. Members were most often selected by election in the dairy cooperatives and by managerial appointment in the locals. Length of service in the groups generally was limited to a set number of years. Less than half of the cooperatives required reports to the board and even fewer required attendance at board meetings. Activities were highly varied and included programs within the cooperative, within the local community, and at the State and national level.

Resources Invested in Educational Programs and Leadership Activities

The cooperatives reported a wide range of direct costs in conducting programs and leadership activities. These costs are reported in table 13. Only expenses directly associated with materials, meals, mailings, and sponsorships to events are included. Such indirect expenses as staff salaries and space, are not included. Dairy cooperatives invested an average \$34,840, ranging from \$7,875 to \$100,000. Local cooperatives reported

Table 13—Amounts invested in direct cost for young member programs and activities in 1982

Cost	Emerging young member programs (24)	Established young member programs (9)	Established dairy co-op programs (7)	Overall
<i>Dollars</i>				
Total investment	15,982	33,900	243,884	29,766
Investment per cooperative	666	3,766	34,840	7,344
Range of investment per co-op:				
lowest	300	800	7,875	
highest	2,000	15,000	100,000	

investing an average of \$3,766 in established young member programs. These cooperatives spent between \$800 to \$15,000 in direct costs for the programs and activities. Local cooperatives with new programs spent an average \$666, ranging from \$300 to \$2,000 on their programs.

Four cooperatives provided the young member leadership group with a budget (table 14). Two dairy cooperatives reported their leadership groups had an average budget of \$24,438 to use for activities in 1982. Two local cooperatives with established programs reported allocating leadership groups with budgets averaging \$22,500. None of the local cooperatives with emerging programs allocated budgets. However, locals with no direct budget allocations provided more personnel assistance than any other organization type (table 15). General managers provided assistance to 16 of the emerging programs, and to 22 of the regional locals. Only one general manager provided assistance in dairy programs.

Member relations staff people were most frequently used for dairy young leader programs. All cooperatives offering young member leadership groups provided at least one resource individual for assistance. Directors provided assistance in 11 programs.

Impact of Educational Programs and Leadership Activities

Involvement of Young Members—The 40 cooperatives responding to the survey reported 5,760 young members participated in educational programs and leadership activities in 1982 (table 16). Dairy cooperatives

Table 14—Number of young member leadership groups which control a budget for activities

Item	Emerging young member programs (16)		Established young member programs (6)		Established dairy co-op programs (6)		Overall	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Number of co-ops	0	0	2	33	2	33	4	14
<i>Dollars</i>								
Average size budget	—		\$22,500		\$24,438		—	

Table 15—Individual(s) providing resource assistance and guidance for young member leadership group¹

Resource person	Emerging young member programs (16)	Established young member programs (6)	Established dairy co-op programs (6)	Overall
<i>Number</i>				
General manager	16	6	1	23
Member relations staff person	7	3	6	16
Other employee	3	2	1	6
Board member	6	3	2	11
No one	2	0	0	2

¹Sum of columns may exceed total cooperatives in category because some cooperatives provide more than one resource person for the young member leadership group.

Table 16—Number of people participating in all young member programs and activities in 1982

Participants	Emerging young member programs (24)	Established young member programs (9)	Established dairy co-op programs (7)	Overall
<i>Number</i>				
Total participants	831	779	4,150	5,760
Average participants per cooperative	34.6	86.6	592.8	144.0
Range of participants	6-60	15-500	70-2,500	6-2,500

involved an average of 59 young members and reported a range of 70 to 2,500 individuals in their programs and activities. Local cooperatives with established programs reported an average of 87 young members took part in their activities with participation levels ranging from 15 to 500 members. The local cooperatives with emerging programs involved an average of 35 people in their young member programs with participation ranging from 6 to 60 members.

Each leadership group averaged 12.9 members in 1982. Local cooperatives averaged about 10 individuals in their groups while dairy cooperatives averaged nearly 213 members. Groups in the locals ranged from 4 to 40 members while dairy groups ranged from 10 to 42 young leaders.

These groups met an average of 4 times a year. Young member groups in the local cooperatives with established programs averaged 9.2 times a year, while the groups in emerging programs met an average of 2.1 times.

Impact on Director Succession—Overall, 24 percent of the directors serving the 40 cooperatives responding to the survey have participated in young member programs (table 17). The nine local cooperatives with established programs reported the highest level with 36 percent of current directors involved at one time with their cooperatives' young member program. The remaining 24 local cooperatives had the lowest level with 14 percent of directors reporting previous young member involvement. However, these cooperatives have been offering young member programs for 3 years or less.

Some 26 percent of dairy cooperative directors had previously been involved in young cooperator programs. One dairy cooperative reported 19 of its 21 directors had participated in the cooperative's 20-year-old young cooperator program. Most directors had been officers of a young leader group.

Manager Opinions on Program Impacts—Managers' opinions about several aspects of young member programs in their cooperatives were assigned a value of 4 for strongly agree, 3 for agree, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree.

Consequently, if all the managers in one category of cooperatives strongly agreed with a statement, the score or value for these managers is 4.0. Alternatively, if they all strongly disagreed with a statement, the manager has a score or value of 1.0. Thus, the values could range from 1.0 to 4.0.

The first statement attempts to measure manager opinion of whether

participation in young member programs leads to better informed members. Managers were asked to react to the statement, “*People participating in young member programs and activities will defend the cooperative against false rumors.*”

As noted in table 18, the manager’s overall score of 3.30 for this statement placed them between agree and strongly agree. Managers of local cooperatives with established young member programs felt the strongest about the statement, averaging a score of 3.88. The managers of the other

Table 17 – Number of current directors who have participated in young member programs of cooperatives

Directors	Emerging young member programs (24)	Established young member programs (9)	Established dairy co-op programs (7)	Overall
<i>Number</i>				
Directors who participated in young member programs	27	28	96	151
Total directors serving cooperative	186	77	365	628
<i>Percent</i>				
Percent of total directors	14	36	26	24
Range of participation in young member programs:				
Lowest	0 of 8 (0%)	2 of 10 (20%)	4 of 44 (10%)	
Highest	5 of 7 (71%)	6 of 7 (85%)	19 of 21 (90%)	

Table 18—Manager opinion of young member programs and activities: More informed members

Opinion Statement: People participating in young member programs and activities will defend the cooperative against false rumors."

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Value*
Emerging young member programs (24)	3	20	1	0	3.08*
Established young member programs (9)	8	1	0	0	3.88*
Established dairy co-op programs (7)	2	5	0	0	3.28*
Overall	13	26	1	0	3.30*

*Value represents a weighted average score and the placement on a scale of 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree for each group of cooperatives.

Table 19—Manager opinion of young member programs and activities: Voting participation

Opinion Statement: People participating in young member programs and activities vote at the annual meetings more than other young members."

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Value*
Emerging young member programs (24)	2	20	2	0	3.00*
Established young member programs (9)	7	2	0	0	3.77*
Established dairy co-op programs (7)	2	5	0	0	3.28*
Overall	11	27	2	0	3.22*

*Value represents a weighted average score and the placement on a scale of 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree for each group of cooperatives.

24 local cooperatives were least supportive, averaging a 3.08 score.

Table 19 shows the results when managers were asked to react to the statement “*People participating in young member programs and activities vote at the annual meeting more than other young members.*” They more than agreed, averaging a score of 3.22 overall. Managers of local cooperatives with established young members provided the greatest support, averaging a 3.77 score. Managers from cooperatives with the least experience scored the lowest but were found to be in agreement, averaging a score of 3.0.

Manager opinions of young member business loyalty was measured with the statement, “*Young members participating in programs and activities stay with the cooperative when you don’t offer the best price in the market?*” (table 20). Twenty-five percent of the respondents disagreed, 75 percent agreed. No one strongly disagreed while one dairy cooperative manager strongly agreed. Twice as many managers with emerging programs agreed than disagreed.

To obtain a measurement of how managers feel about the return the cooperative receives for time and money expended for young member

Table 20— Manager opinion of young member programs and activities: Business loyalty

Opinion Statement: Young members participating in programs and activities stay with the cooperative when you don’t offer the best price in the market.”

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Value*
Emerging young member programs (24)	0	16	8	0	2.66*
Established young member programs (9)	0	7	2	0	2.77*
Established dairy co-op programs (7)	1	6	0	0	3.14*
Overall	1	29	10	0	2.87*

*Value represents a weighted average score and the placement on a scale of 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree for each group of cooperatives.

programs, managers were asked to react to a negative statement: “*Programs and activities for young members are too expensive for the amount of time and money invested.*” (table 21)

None agreed with this statement. The average score was 1.52. Managers felt their cooperatives received good value for the time and money invested in the programs and activities. Dairy cooperative managers placed the greatest value for the investment in young cooperative programs.

Managers were asked how they felt their directors reacted to young member programs. Managers were asked to react to the statement “*Young member programs and activities represent a threat to our board of directors.*”

Overall, the managers scored 1.55, midway between disagree and strongly disagree. No local manager agreed with the statement. Dairy cooperative managers disagreed the least, averaging a 2.0 score. Two dairy cooperative managers agreed with the statement.

The reactions to the statements indicated managers felt members participating in young member programs, compared with other young members, tended to be more informed and supportive of the cooperative. They believed these young members were more likely to vote at the annual

Table 21 – Manager opinion of young member programs and activities: Value for time and money invested

Opinion Statement: Programs and activities for young members are too expensive for the amount of time and money invested.”

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Value*
Emerging young member programs (24)	0	0	14	10	1.58%
Established young member programs (9)	0	0	5	4	1.55*
Established dairy co-op programs (7)	0	0	2	5	1.28*
Overall	0	0	21	19	1.52*

*Value represents a weighted average score and the placement on a scale of 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree for each group of cooperatives.

meeting. Several managers believed members did not remain loyal when offered better prices from competitors. Most believed members would stick with the cooperative.

Survey results show managers believed their cooperative received good value for time and money invested in young member programs and activities. Most managers believed these programs did not represent a threat to their directors.

Managerial Tips on Program Development

The following comments represent the suggestions managers offered cooperatives considering and planning young member programs:

I strongly recommend that local cooperatives promote their organization through young farmer programs. Remember, they are your future customers and leaders.

I have found young farmer programs are a very good way to involve these members in the cooperative. I remain a little surprised that in some instances the program has been very shallow in creating loyalty or commitment from our members who have served on the associate board.

Be sure to start a program. Young farmers won't likely do business with you unless they know more about the cooperative than the competitor.

Have definite projects for young farmers to work on. Provide guidance and recommendations because young ideas with older experience can be great.

Keep program high quality and provide what they want.

Once a program is started, stick with it even if the demands on your time may be heavy.

Start small, get people who will assume part of the leadership for the group, get your younger, aggressive farmers and their wives involved, give them plenty of opportunity for their inputs.

In our trade territory, this type of educational process is needed to get the young farmer to patronize the co-op.

Today there are too many outside influences to get the young member away from the co-op way of doing business. Programs for young members that we

have sponsored have made positive waves. The key is to continue to update and have these programs each year to make the young member interested and active in *their* co-op.

Don't be concerned about difficult questions. Answer them honestly and openly. The future is with the young members.

We just started and have a lot to learn. I do feel it is very important to get the manager and a couple of members of the board involved in presenting information about the co-op.

Young people are ambitious and get impatient. Be sure to have plenty of activities for them to be involved in. Involvement in cooperative politics may be threatening to board support.

Programs need to be held close to the membership. Young farmers will not drive over 30-50 miles one way.

Start small, expand over several years.

We started with a contest. One couple from each district participated. Five were selected to serve 3-year terms on our consultant committee. The contest route was very effective for selecting young farmers. I think it is providing a solid framework for our seminars.

Be patient, results will not quickly be forthcoming. Expect opposition from some members of the board of directors.

Inject some fun and social activities in your educational programs.

Attempt to have at least one "project" going at all times. For wider participation, take the show to the boondocks, don't expect great crowds to come together at one point. For the first few years, expect to work with small groups.

If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well. First-class treatment is important. Make the young cooperators feel special, they are the future.

MEMBER RELATIONS SPECIALISTS INTERVIEWS

Nine member relation specialists from four regional cooperatives were our experts in the field helping shape the survey and directing us to locals and dairy co-ops with young member programs. They were important in

providing insights from their own experiences with these programs. Because of the wealth of information they possess, results of interviews with them provide additional help to managers and directors planning future young member programs. Rather than duplicate information revealed in the manager survey, we only present new information, or information not borne out by the survey.

Each specialist averaged 6.5 years' experience working on educational and leadership programs, with respective experiences ranging from 3 to 15 years. All have worked with at least 7 cooperatives; one has worked with 35. The average is 14 cooperatives. Two specialists have had previous experience with State councils of cooperatives developing similar young member programs.

The specialists reported their regional cooperative became active in the development of young member programs when they saw young farmers were less interested in patronizing and participating in cooperatives than older members.

Regional Cooperative Assistance to Local Young Member Programs

Three of four regional cooperatives in the study provided member cooperatives with suggested outlines for a regular or annual series of educational meetings for young members. They supplied a packet for local cooperative managers that included suggested invitation letters, an agenda for each meeting, and handout materials and slide/tape presentations to supplement presentations of local managers and directors.

Two regional cooperatives provided staff (member relations, marketing and product specialists) for presentations during the educational programs. One cooperative provided matching funds for meal and tour expenses for young member programs.

Three of the four regional cooperatives provided annual conferences directly to young members. The conferences included a 2- or 3-day session in a resort setting. Contents of the program included a mix of basic cooperative instruction, information about the regional cooperative (services and products), problem-solving discussion sessions, and social activities (swimming, golf, skiing, etc.).

One regional cooperative provided a special 2-day session for young members in conjunction with its annual meeting.

Two of the regional cooperatives arranged tours for young members of their facilities and research farms. All four regionals provided sponsorships for young members to the National Institute on Cooperative Education. This weeklong educational event, held on a different land-grant university campus each summer, has included a program for young members since 1968.

Impacts of Local Young Member Programs: Assessments By Member Relations Specialists

Specialists reported a wide range of results from young member programs. Programs of some local cooperatives had failed to generate enough interest to hold meetings. Some local managers complained that the most “desirable” young farmers are involved in other leadership programs. Other managers were unable to find young couples to sponsor regional cooperative programs.

At the other extreme, specialists reported some local cooperatives attract 400 young members to educational events. These young member leadership groups took an active role in planning and presenting programs and activities within the cooperative and the community.

The specialists reported most managers noticed an immediate patronage increase from young members who participated in local and regional cooperative programs. Managers found these young members asked more questions and were more likely to attend annual meetings.

The specialist noted that over a period of 3 to 5 years, cooperative members began to elect participants in young member programs to the board of directors. They found this trend most often in cooperatives where young members frequently presented reports of their experiences and activities during the annual meeting.

Factors Contributing to Program Failure

The member relations specialists identified several factors which they believed contributed to the failure of young member programs. Table 22 displays the number of specialists who identified the specific factors.

With the exception of those items dealing directly with program support—budget, resources—all reflected a lack of appreciation of the distinctiveness of cooperatives. Emphasis on sales and product and service promotion are first and third on the list. Lack of member involvement—a fundamental

principle of cooperative maintenance—is second. Overall lack of sensitivity to member representation and member input is cited by more than half of the specialists as contributing to program failure.

Failure to evaluate the program and failure to hire a manager committed to member involvement were each identified by one specialist only. However, most specialists have had years of experiences with several programs and are experts in their field. Even those factors identified by only one specialist cannot be ignored.

Table 22—Factors leading to failure of young member programs

Factor	Number of specialists identifying factor
Manager primarily interested in increasing sales through program	8
Lack of young member involvement in designing program and activities	7
Dominate feature of programs were co-op product and service promotion, rather than basic co-op topics	7
Manager and director fear of criticism in an open meeting	6
Failure to provide young members ample opportunity to give their opinion's	5
Director concern with young members competing for their board position	5
Criticism by older members of funds spent on program	3
Expecting the program to run itself, no resource assistance	2
Program victim of budget cuts	2
Hiring a new manager not committed to building member involvement	1
Failure to evaluate program	1

Factors Contributing to Program Success

Table 23 presents the factors contributing to program success. Many of these factors represent the flip side of the factors leading to the demise of young member programs.

Critically important are member involvement and understanding. High on the list are factors dealing directly with member input. However, the specialists suggested success may be difficult without manager commitment to program objectives. Not to be ignored is the willingness to justify the program in the face of budget cuts. The specialists emphasized that program

Table 23—Factors leading to the successful young member programs

Factor	Number of specialists identifying factor
Manager strongly committed to long-term value of program	9
Use of advisory group to establish and guide program	8
Frequent opportunities for young members to ask questions/suggest changes	8
Clear understanding of board and management of purposes of program	6
Development of regular program features, not change every year	5
Sponsorship of young member to other organization events	5
Establishing a budget for program, giving young member voice in how funds are used	4
Regular young member reports of activities/experiences of membership meetings/newsletter	3
Using board member and staff member as resource to group	3
Justify program in face of budget cuts	2

success was linked to member involvement and managerial support. The principles of cooperative involvement cannot be sacrificed in the interest of patronage and product promotion.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM MAIL SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

Cooperatives with emerging young member programs (24) averaged \$5.6 million in sales and served 1,156 members. Cooperatives with established programs (9) average sales of \$22.9 million and served 2,082 members. The dairy cooperatives (7) in the survey averaged sales of \$759.7 million and served 7,798 members. The more established young member programs involved an average of 87 participants in 1982. Emerging young member programs attracted an average of 35 people to events. Dairy cooperatives averaged about 593 members in their programs.

Cooperatives with more established programs offered a regular seminar series to acquaint a new group of young members with the cooperative each year, 1-day sessions for all young members, tours of local and regional cooperative facilities, and sponsorship of young members to events presented by regional cooperatives, cooperative councils, and national organizations. Cooperatives with emerging programs offered similar opportunities but not as often.

Sixty percent of local cooperatives had established young farmer leadership groups. These groups averaged about 10 young people. Leadership groups met about nine times a year in established programs; about twice a year in the emerging programs. Dairy cooperative groups met about four times a year. Most groups served as an advisory committee for the board of directors.

Regional cooperative member relations specialists reported most managers noticed an immediate patronage increase from young members who participated in local and regional cooperative programs. Their young members asked more questions and were more likely to attend annual meetings. Also, cooperative members began to elect participants in young member programs to the board of directors.

Local cooperative managers found members participating in young member programs, compared with other young members, tended to be more informed and supportive of the cooperative. They indicated these young members were more likely to vote at the annual meeting and keep doing business with the cooperative when competitors offered better prices. Dairy cooperative managers reported similar experiences.

Managers from established programs reported 36 percent of their current directors participated in the cooperative's young member program. Fourteen percent of directors of cooperatives with emerging programs participated in young member programs.

Twenty-six percent of the directors serving the seven dairy co-ops surveyed participated in young member programs. Most managers reported that programs are not threatening to directors.

According to member relations specialists, the three leading factors contributing to successful programs were (1) a manager strongly committed to the long-term value of a program, (2) use of an advisory groups to establish and guide the program, and (3) frequent opportunities for young members to ask questions and suggest changes. Three factors leading to failure of young member programs were (1) manager primarily interested in increasing sales through the program, (2) lack of young member involvement in designing programs and activities, and (3) program dominated by product and service promotion rather than basic cooperative topics.

Direct investment in young member programs by all cooperatives surveyed averaged \$7,344 in 1982. Dairy cooperative averaged \$34,840, established local programs \$3,766, and emerging programs \$666. While locals with emerging programs provided the least amount of direct financial support, they provided the greatest support in personnel assistance to young member leadership groups.

Overall, managers believed cooperatives received good value for time and money invested in young member programs and activities.

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

The results of the interviews with regional cooperative member relations specialists and the mail survey of local cooperative managers suggest a number of assumptions upon which cooperative leaders may base the development of young member programs. These assumptions include:

1. Most young farmers were not farming when today's cooperatives were formed. These younger farmers will not fully appreciate the past and potential role of cooperatives in their agricultural industry unless they become involved in the activities of the cooperative (2, pp. II-6). Given an opportunity to appreciate the contributions of cooperatives, informed young

members will more likely support and serve in leadership positions .

2. Young member programs complement cooperative performance. They are not a substitute for meeting the economic needs of young members. However, as young members understand the benefits of cooperation and the competitive force of the cooperative, they may be more willing to weather short-term cooperative adjustments to market conditions.

3. The commitment of the manager to the long-term organizational benefits of involving young members in educational programs is essential. The manager needs to be actively involved in initiating and designing a young member program that amounts to much more than a merchandising ploy.

4. The support and encouragement of the board of directors likewise is essential to a successful young member program. Director must be continually involved in the program to overcome concerns they may have about the impact of a young member program. The program should be perceived as part of a larger mission of involving members of all ages .

5. Two-way flow of basic information, opinions, and suggestions between younger members and cooperative leaders is essential to overcome perceived objections and provide products and services that will attract greater young member participation. Such programs should encourage an active dialogue between young members and manager and directors of the cooperative Cooperative leaders can use young member feedback as a basis for improving cooperative products and services.

6. The most productive communications channel between cooperative managers/directors and younger members is through active young members who already understand the need for a cooperative and who, by action and voice, support the cooperatives. Messages from peers far outweigh the credibility of messages from organizational leaders (5, p. 118). The programs should include plans to reach a stage whereby a young member leadership group can function regularly as a communications link between young members and the manager/directors.

7. The introduction of a young member program represents an innovation for the cooperative. Directors, managers, and young members all should participate in designing a young member program to fit the situation of a particular cooperative.

With this information in hand the authors can now suggest some tips for starting programs and keeping them going.

Starting a Program

1. Boards of directors and managers discuss the potential for a young member program. The board adopts a policy outlining the basic purposes of the program. Through the policy, the directors confirm their basic responsibility for perpetuating the cooperative by helping younger people discover the opportunities and benefits of cooperation.

2. The cooperative creates an awareness of the potential of a young member program. Sponsor one or more couples to a young member conference conducted by a regional cooperative council. Ask the couple(s) to report their experiences to the board of directors.

3. The cooperative leadership considers alternatives for a young member program:

A. Ask the board of directors to establish a young member task force (ad hoc committee) to (1) recommend an educational program that will most likely succeed in the cooperative and (2) conduct the first young member educational event.

B. Appoint at least the following people to the task force: One young couple who has participated in a young member conference of regional cooperative or cooperative council; the general manager; one director.

Other task force members could include: (1) Up to two additional young members or couples, (2) one employee who regularly contacts members of all ages and who may have an interest in providing staff assistance for future young member activities, (3) other directors, (4) field service employees of regional cooperative, (5) county extension agent or vocational agriculture instructor.

C. Ask the task force to consider as many options as possible. They may obtain information about other young member programs from the regional cooperative (including what program assistance member relations staff provides local cooperatives), cooperative councils, visits to cooperatives with successful programs, etc. The options may likely include: (1) A daytime or evening event, possibly incorporating a tour of local facilities, (2) a series of educational seminars held over a number of weeks, (3) a retreat overnight at a resort setting.

D. Ask the task force to include the following in their recommendations to the board of directors: (1) The objectives of a young member program,

(2) the role of the board and manager in the program, (3) persons who will provide resource guidance and assistance, (4) an outline for the first educational event, (5) a budget for the event, (6) a plan of how to attract or invite the first group of young members.

4. The cooperative conducts the first young member event:

A. Ask the young member task force to host the first event.

B. Use the event to help young members become familiar with the fundamental feature of the cooperative by including a discussion of: (1) role of members, board, and manager, (2) the cooperative's decisionmaking system, (3) the method of financing the cooperative, (4) a brief history of the cooperative leading to current operations, and (5) affiliations with other cooperatives.

C. Provide ample opportunity for young members to question cooperative leaders. Draw out suggestions of how the cooperative could better serve members.

D. Provide some social activity. Use get-acquainted mixers, serve meal or snack.

E. Ask young members to individually evaluate the educational event and suggest improvements for future events.

5. The board of directors appoints a young member advisory committee.

A. As the final business item at the first young member educational event, invite young members to volunteer to serve on an advisory committee to replace the initial task force.

B. Provide the advisory committee one director and one staff member (preferably those who served on the task force) as resources to the committee.

C. Provide the advisory committee a budget.

D. Ask the advisory committee to suggest ways to improve and repeat the first event for another group of young members. Ask the committee to suggest additional community-wide young member programs and activities.

Keeping the Program Going

1. Formalize a young member leadership group. Ask the volunteer advisory committee (formed after the first educational event) to recommend a plan for annual selection/election of young member leaders. The committee may develop a constitution (appendix A).
2. Encourage the young member leadership group to prepare an annual plan of activities to be submitted to the board as part of the budgeting process. Keep the young leaders responsible and accountable for young member program budget.
3. Encourage the young member leadership group to design a basic educational program and sponsorships to other educational events that can be incorporated into a regular program for young members.
4. Supplement the basic educational program with special projects (promotions, open houses, demonstration plot field days, etc.) Recommend the leadership group use a project proposal similar to appendix B to secure approval for any projects beyond the scope of their annual plan.
5. Assign one employee (general manager or his designee) to assist the leadership group and help implement the various programs and activities. Appoint one director or adviser to the leadership group.
6. Ask the young member leadership group to present a report of activities at the annual membership meeting. Use newsletter stories of activities and columns written by young members to inform entire membership of activities.
7. Invite the young leadership group to attend at least one board meeting each year. Give them ample opportunity to express their opinions, concerns, and suggestions for improving the cooperative's services and products.
8. Recognize young leaders for their contributions to the cooperative.

An ongoing young member program, properly encouraged, guided, and funded, should produce a steady stream of informed member-owners. These informed members will provide the foundation for the participation and patronage the cooperative enterprise ultimately requires for its very existence. Young member programs may well prove to be a key element in the survival of the cooperative.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Constitution of A Young Cooperator Program

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this organization shall be PROGRESSIVE CO-OP YOUNG COOPERATORS.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

This organization is formed for educational purposes with particular emphasis on agricultural education. Its objective is to help young people develop their understanding of cooperatives and to lead them into the mainstream of cooperative leadership.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this organization shall be open to any member of PROGRESSIVE CO-OP, age 18 or older. Voting rights and rights to seek office shall be limited to those 18 to 35 years of age.

Each member shall be entitled to one vote. There will be no proxy votes.

ARTICLE IV. ORGANIZATION

The organization shall be composed of members from the general area served by the cooperative.

The adviser of the organization shall be a member of the cooperative's management staff.

The fiscal year for this association shall coincide with that of PROGRESSIVE CO-OP's.

ARTICLE V. COUNCIL AND OFFICERS

The purpose of the council is to establish the program of activities for the organization and to provide the necessary leadership to carry out the activities.

Each of the cooperative's seven districts shall have a council member to represent them on the Young Cooperator Council. The council members will be elected for 2-year terms, with one-half of the council members being elected one year and one-half the next. If married, the elected member's spouse may serve with them, but will not have voting rights on the council. The election of the council will take place at the annual meeting of the membership by all eligible members of the organization present at the

annual meeting. A member of PROGRESSIVE CO-OP's management staff will serve as the adviser on the council.

The officers of the Young Cooperators shall be as follows: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. A reporter will be appointed by the President.

Each officer shall be elected annually by the council at an organizational meeting of the council held immediately after the annual meeting of the Young Cooperators.

If for any reasons a council position becomes vacant, a council member will be elected by the remaining council members at the next regular council meeting. The newly elected council member will fill the unexpired term of the person they replaced.

In the event an office may become vacant, a new officer shall be elected as a replacement at the next regular meeting of the council.

The council shall meet at least four times each year. The President or adviser may call a meeting as needed.

The council shall have committees consisting of: Executive Committee; Government Affairs Committee; Public and Member Relations Committee; Social Committee and any other committees that may be deemed necessary by the council.

The executive committee shall consist of the elected officers of the council and the adviser. The president shall serve as chairman. The executive committee shall conduct the business of the organization in accordance with the constitution. The executive committee will make appointments for all other committees.

The government affairs committee shall be responsible to keep the membership informed of legislative matters affecting the membership and if necessary to provide the necessary support to effect such legislation.

The public and member relations committee shall be responsible for maintaining an accurate, up-to-date membership list. They shall also be responsible to encourage new membership and provide leadership for member education programs on cooperative education.

The social committee shall be responsible for the social functions of the

organization. That responsibility includes planning and conducting such events in such manner as to enhance the organization.

ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Regular meetings shall be held in accordance with the schedule contained in the program for the year developed by the council.

There shall be an annual meeting of the membership within 4 months of the start of each fiscal year for the purpose of electing council members, to receive the report of officers on annual activities, and for such other business that may legally come before the membership.

The guide for conduct for the meeting of the membership shall be the constitution and Roberts Rules of Order.

ARTICLE VII. SERVICE TO MEMBERSHIP

The general service shall be to promote and assist in the education of the cooperative, government affairs, public and member relations, and any other service as directed by the board of directors of PROGRESSIVE LAND CO-OP.

ARTICLE VIII. FINANCES

No dues shall be paid to the organization by any member.

An annual budget, approved by the council, will be submitted to the board of directors by the council treasurer in the last month of each fiscal year for final approval for the following year.

ARTICLE IX. AUTHORITY

Final authority for any and all of the Young Cooperators' functions rest with the board of directors of PROGRESSIVE CO-OP. The council president shall present an annual program of events to the board of directors in the last month of each fiscal year for final approval for the following year.

ARTICLE X. AMENDMENTS

Any proposed amendments to this constitution shall be made to the council. The proposed amendment will be presented to the council with their recommendations. The council may approve the recommendation(s) and present them to the membership in action at their next annual meeting.

A review of the constitution shall be made at a fall meeting of the council on an annual basis.

APPENDIX B: Sample Project Proposal for A Young Cooperator Program

Progressive Young Cooperator Representative Project Proposal

NOTE: You may use this form for three purposes: (1) To evaluate the project, identify major problems and benefits of your project idea; (2) to develop preliminary plans for carrying out your idea; and (3) to present your plan to others in a complete, organized manner.

1. Name of project:

2. Brief description of project:

3. What benefits will be obtained as a result of this project:

For Young Cooperator Representatives:

For Progressive Cooperative:

For Members and/or the General Public:

For Others:

4. Who will be involved with this project and what will be their responsibilities?

5. How will Progressive Cooperative be involved?

Employee:

Clerical and Secretarial (typing, mailing, etc.):

Other:

6. Projected Timetable and/or deadlines:

7. Estimated budget:

8. Project Leader:

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Cooperative Service
Washington, D.C. 20250**

Agricultural Cooperative Service (ACS) provides research, management, and educational assistance to cooperatives to strengthen the economic position of farmers and other rural residents. It works directly with cooperative leaders and Federal and State agencies to improve organization, leadership, and operation of cooperatives and to give guidance to further development.

The agency (1) helps farmers and other rural residents develop cooperatives to obtain supplies and services at lower cost and to get better prices for products they sell; (2) advises rural residents on developing existing resources through cooperative action to enhance rural living; (3) helps cooperatives improve services and operating efficiency; (4) informs members, directors, employees, and the public on how cooperatives work and benefit their members and their communities; and (5) encourages international cooperative programs.

ACS publishes research and educational materials and issues *Farmer Cooperatives* magazine. All programs and activities are conducted on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.