

NOTES

Latinas in cooperatives

Wages started 13 years ago

Emma's Eco-Clean: 1999

Eco-Care: 2001

Natural Home Cleaning: 2003

After 3-5 years of training and assistance from WAGES, the coops become independent. Wages helps when needed, especially with training.

Professional trainer:

New members work with experienced member. At the end of the training, they have a "marriage ceremony" to induct the new member. The coops are like families.

Maria: Founding member of Emma's Eco-Clean, currently serves as the General Manager

We try to make financial reports understandable to everyone.

In meetings, decisions are made by a "super majority."

We educate clients on how to use eco-friendly cleaning products.

Most clients have asthma/allergies.

We use recycled rags instead of paper towels.

We're proud of our work.

We use cold water instead of hot, in order to save energy.

We are helping low income women *and* the environment.

We have health benefits, good wages, paid vacation, disability insurance.

The General Manager serves as a liaison between clients and socios.

Question: How did you learn about Wages? How did you join?

Several of us were doing a computer training program. Wages came there and gave a presentation.

We did 9months (200 hours) of training.

We raised \$10,000 by bake sales, car washes.

Work Day:

3-5 houses are cleaned per day

7-9 hours per day

different socios decide to have different work hours

Meetings:

Each co-op has monthly (or twice-monthly) meetings.

The different coops do not have association-wide meetings.

On the meeting day, there is no work. That day, in addition to going to the meeting, the socios can do other personal errands, such as going to the doctor or going to a meeting at their child's school.

Meetings are kept on a schedule

Meeting rules are posted during meetings so that everyone can see them.

They stick to the agenda. If other ideas arise, they are written down on a separate large sheet of paper.

Sometimes, we ask someone from Wages to come in and observe our meeting

(There are 3 Wages trainers [including 1 executive director]. They are currently creating a curriculum that will enable socios to become qualified as trainers)

When there is a conflict about a certain aspect of work, they create a policy in order to avoid future conflicts about this same issue. (Example: how to distribute end of the year tips from clients?)

Sometimes members come up with the new policies, and sometimes Wages suggests new policies.

When people are shy at a meeting, we give them specific tasks in order to get them involved.

Starting the meeting on time, having an agenda, and posting the meeting rules is very important.

Participation in meetings:

People participate differently; we try to understand this.

During a workshop/training, Wages asked socios how they felt about their level of individual participation.

- some people felt forced to talk

- some felt embarrassed

- some don't want to repeat what others have already said

- as a result, a new meeting rule was made about listening closely during meetings, and not talking while others are talking.

- people who don't talk say that their silence indicates approval of whatever has been said.

Making Agendas:

They use leftover agenda items from the previous meeting.

The General Manager writes the agenda, including items that reflect what has been happening recently at the coop.

General Manager: liaison between client and socios

She is a socia (member)

Operations manager: does finances

She is also a socia

How do you get a management position?

Oftentimes, it is a matter of who among the socios has the best level of English

Sometimes, they hire somebody from the outside

New Members:

6 month test period

Until the co-op becomes independent from Wages, there is a mandatory training beforehand with Wages (50-60 hours)

After the co-op is independent from Wages, the socios do their own training.

Hourly wages:

There is a wage difference between cleaners and managers, but the manager's wage is capped, while the socios' wages can go up as the business grows.

Founding members make \$2-3 more per hour than new members.