

Plainfield Co-op 2010 Survey Summary Report

156 individuals completed the Plainfield Co-op survey (18 on paper and 138 online). Thanks to everyone for taking the time to let us know how you think the Co-op is doing and how the Co-op can improve. The input will be taken to heart as the board further defines the results for which the organization exists and the management collective creates and executes plans to attain those results.

The survey was based on a food co-op satisfaction survey created by the National Cooperative Grocers Association in 2008 in conjunction with 30 food co-ops of all sizes. The board and staff edited the survey to better meet our needs, with more opportunity for commentary and questions specific to the Co-op's mission.

A copy of the full survey data is available at the Co-op for viewing or you can access it at the Co-op's website – www.plainfieldcoop.com.

Data Highlights

About the respondents.

90% of those responding are current members of the Co-op. Almost half have been members for more than 10 years and almost a third have been members for more than 20 years. Of the members, 13% have been regular working members in the past year and 8% have been working members at some point in the past year.

37% of respondents are members of other co-ops. A few other food co-ops were represented, but Hunger Mountain Co-op was by far the most common other co-op (32% of respondents).

72% of the respondents live within five miles of the Co-op

About a third of those responding are below the age of 50. Maybe central Vermont's age distribution is different than the national average, but nationally, those under 50 represent about 60% of the population. The age ranges for this survey question started at "18-24", increased to "60-64" and ended at "65+." It was pointed out that the five-year age ranges should have continued beyond 64. This will be corrected on the next survey.

27% of those responding spend most of their grocery dollars at the Plainfield Co-op, and 31% at Hunger Mountain Co-op. No other stores or co-ops are the primary food store of more than 13% of the respondents. Shaw's in Berlin and PriceChopper were the next most common primary food store. More than 40% of the respondents spend less than a quarter of their grocery dollar at the Co-op and 63% of the respondents shop at the Co-op at least once a week.

Co-op products and operations

Of the various product categories, Bulk is the only one that people purchase more often at the Co-op than at other outlets. Bread/Bakery, Fruits/Vegetables and Dairy are categories for which the Co-op comes close to being the primary source. Of the other primary categories (food categories which more than 75% of shoppers say they purchase), the Co-op does not fare well against the competition in Grocery and Meat.

When asked what "store characteristics" are most important to the respondents, five were chosen much more often than others. In order of preference: "Quality/freshness of products", "Availability of natural/organic foods", "Location of store/convenience", "Prices", and "Product selection/variety." As to how well the Co-op is meeting these important "where to shop for groceries" determinants, the respondents say the Co-op does best with "Location of store/convenience" and "Availability of natural/organic foods", and almost as well with

“Quality/freshness of products”, but much less well with “Prices”, and “Product selection/variety.”

Readers of this report are encouraged to review the complete results of the survey. About half of the respondents provided an answer to the question, “Do you have any comments regarding how the Plainfield Co-op is meeting your needs with respect to store operations or the products offered/not offered?” Respondents often mentioned satisfaction with the current operations of the Co-op, especially the renovations. Those addressing why they don’t spend more of their grocery dollars at the Co-op most often mention high prices, but inconsistent availability of some items and insufficient variety were also mentioned.

There is general satisfaction with the Co-op. Two thirds of the respondents indicated they would very likely recommend the Co-op to a friend or colleague and most of the others indicated they likely would.

Co-op Membership and Community

For those who are a member, being a member of the Co-op is a very important factor in deciding to shop there. Receiving the newsletter and member discounts are important as well, but less so. Most respondents strongly agreed that the Co-op has had a positive influence on the community and works to create a sense of community.

When asked about the Co-op championing social issues, support of local, sustainable agriculture was seen, by far, as the most important issue. Addressing local hunger issues was selected by almost half respondents and promoting recycling by almost a third. About 4% of respondents thought the Co-op should not champion social issues.

Co-op Information

When asked what sources of Co-op information are most important, respondents said in-store postings are most important with informal conversations and emailed newsletter next. Given the comments, there is strong support for the Co-op newsletter in both paper and online form

Regarding Co-op news and information, Co-op community events are seen as most important, and regarding foods and products information, locally produced products and food production practices are seen as most important.

Co-op Community Center

A bit less than half of those responding had used the Community Center in the past year and less than 7% have rented it. Of the ten that rented it, almost all found the space suited their needs well and would recommend it to others, but fewer found the rental process trouble-free.

Co-op Mission

About half of the respondents provided an answer to the question, “Given the mission of the Plainfield Co-op, how do you see the Co-op serving the community in the next 10 years? What ideas? What visions?” Quantifying responses to open questions is problematic, but working with local food producers was a strong theme throughout. Encouraging group food growing, processing and storage was also mentioned often. A strong commitment to outreach and education was probably mentioned next most often. Again, reading the actual commentary is encouraged.

Co-op Member Involvement

About a third of the respondents provided an answer to the question, “An important part of a vibrant cooperative

is member involvement. Please let us know what the board and staff can do to help you and other community members be more involved.” The responses included many requests for more prominent and timely postings of work task needs. There was common mention of not having time to do regular tasks for the Co-op. Many respondents indicated they would likely be able to respond to one-time projects.

Les Snow

For the Co-op Board, March 2010