

Pittsburgh Progress Cooperative Community Membership Agreement

Adopted Sept. 2, 2026

Background and Mission Statement

Members of the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh understand that community members were key to the union's historic strike victory over the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Once they determined to forge a cooperative news organization, they knew community members would be key to its success, too. So while building the Pittsburgh Progress Cooperative, they formed two member classes: A worker member class and a community member class.

Community members quickly filled knowledge gaps and brought new ideas and voices to the effort, creating a vibrant ecosystem of support. This aligns with studies showing that cooperatives that include multi-membership classes are strengthened by the added diversity, greater perspective, and wider range of skills that those membership classes bring to the organization.

The mission of the Pittsburgh Progress is to forge a publication that engages more effectively and sustainably as a source of communication and connection that reflects the concerns of working-class people.

A sustainable and healthy democracy is built on the foundation of an informed society. We believe worker and community-centered and controlled journalism is a critical public good, playing an important role in our community, better enabling people to have the information they need to participate in a democratic society and be well-informed in order to hold those in power accountable.

This cooperative has resolved to operate with the Seven Cooperative Principles, as follows, at heart¹:

1. Open and Voluntary Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Members' Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training, and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

What this Document is:

The bylaws and articles of incorporation form the core governing documents of the Pittsburgh Progress. Bylaws will be made accessible to members on the Progress website or by request to The Progress. They determine how power, money, and information flow through our collectively owned and controlled enterprise, addressing things like how a supporter becomes a community member co-owner of the cooperative and what that means for community members and workers of the cooperative.

The membership agreement is a contract between the individual community members, worker members, and the cooperative as a whole. When community members sign this document and pay the \$99.99 Membership Share buy-in price to acquire their membership share, it is the legal mechanism that makes a community member a co-owner with workers and other community members.

¹ You can read more of the cooperative principles at <https://ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>

Definitions:

The Pittsburgh Progress Cooperative, Inc: the formal name of the Cooperative by which it has been incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Pittsburgh Progress: the working name of the Cooperative's publication, and the registered fictitious name (DBA) of the Cooperative This is also referred to as "Progress" as shorthand.

Membership Share: The investment Members make into the Cooperative that entitles them to one vote. Its cost is decided by the Board of Directors. This is also called a "common share" in documents such as Pittsburgh Progress bylaws.

Member: a person or organization with a single delegate who/that owns a Membership Share of the Cooperative and agrees to abide by the Cooperative's bylaws and policies

Community Member: a member who chooses to join the Cooperative, owns a Membership Share, does not plan to be a Worker Member, and is a co-owner of the Cooperative.

Worker Member: An employee of the Cooperative who has met criteria to own a Worker Membership Share of the Cooperative and has signed the worker member owner agreement detailing responsibilities and rights of Worker Member Owners. An employee may choose to be a community member co-owner while working to become a worker co-owner.

Board of Directors: the governing body of the Cooperative responsible for oversight, governing decisions, and major business decisions of the Cooperative. It's often called "the Board" for short. Members of the Board are also called "Directors". Directors are elected by the Membership.

Subscription: a commitment by anyone to receive the editorial output and products of the Cooperative. The cost of a Subscription and other associated benefits are set by the Board or by Worker Members delegated to do so by the Board.

Difference between Membership Agreement & Bylaws: This Membership Agreement defines the relationship between Members and the Cooperative. The Bylaws guide the identity, governance, and decision-making structure of the Cooperative.

Difference between a Subscription and Membership Share: I understand that a subscription is different from membership. Doing the labor of research, writing, photography, editing, administrative work, outreach, and building community relationships to produce quality journalism and communication requires time and work from dedicated people. The subscription people pay on a monthly, or yearly basis is a recurring payment used to produce quality journalism through the Cooperative, Pittsburgh Progress.

A subscription is not the same as co-op membership. You also don't need a membership to be a subscriber. The Cooperative may institute a metered paywall on the Progress's website, which will have a number of articles accessible for free. Past that, readers will need a subscription. Subscriptions cost \$9.99/mo. Members do receive a discounted rate on subscriptions. A membership grants extra rights and privileges as detailed below, above and beyond a subscription.

Rights and Benefits to Members as of Sept. 2, 2026:

- Access to a discounted Member subscription rate.
- Elect community members to the cooperative board (as per bylaws, the board of directors is made up of 75% Worker Members and 25% Community Members).
- Run for an elected Community Member seat on our cooperative board at the Cooperative's Annual Meetings
- Voting on major decisions such as those that will require major community buy in/investment. (Day-to-day matters of running the publication is a right and responsibility held only by the worker-member class)
- Budget transparency through attendance at the annual meeting.
- Opportunity to empower community-centered journalism

- The opportunity to make a further investment in the Cooperative.
 - In alignment with cooperative principle 2: *Democratic Member Control*; one person may hold only one Membership voting Share; no person is allowed more than one vote in the cooperative. Any further investment does not buy a person or organization extra votes or control over any editorial policies.

Other Benefits in development to Community member co-owners **may include** Limited-edition member-exclusive merchandise.

- Special events and workshops with journalists, other workers, and/or other community members

Membership Share initiation fee. I understand that as a community member I agree to purchase a Cooperative Membership Share as consideration for receipt of a Membership Share issued to me by the Cooperative in accordance with the Articles and Bylaws. Membership on a monthly payment basis is contingent on continued payments month to month. Unpaid monthly installments may result in loss of membership in good standing and all rights associated with a membership in good standing.

I understand that running a newsroom dedicated to independent working-class journalism needs ongoing support and that after my first year of membership there will be a member renewal fee, which will be communicated to members for ongoing support of local independent journalism.

I understand that my Membership Share initiation fee is what helps fund the community and member benefit and engagement for the Pittsburgh Progress and is not redeemable or transferable, and I agree not to sell, assign any interest in, and/or otherwise transfer my Membership Share, except as provided in the Bylaws.

Withdrawal. I understand that I may at any time terminate my Membership in the Cooperative; provided, however, that I agree to be bound by any terms and conditions in the Bylaws, the Operating Policies and Rules, and this agreement which will be accessible to all members.

Removal. The Progress strives to create a collaborative environment conducive to a vibrant, safe and respectful community and these policies reflect that effort. I understand that physical or sexual harassment, pedophilia, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and any expression of disrespect and/or intolerance of size, gender identity, sexual identity/expression, (dis)ability, age, educational level, and cultural background are incompatible with the future this cooperative wants to help create. I understand that if an incident arises toward another cooperative member, I may be asked to engage in a mediation process, as outlined in the bylaws, depending on the severity of the incident (such as sexual assault) or that if the incident is part of an ongoing pattern of behavior, the Cooperative's board retains the right to vote to remove a member.

Name of Applicant: _____ Date of Application: _____
 Street Address: _____ City _____
 State _____ Zip _____
 Email _____ Phone Number _____
 Signature: _____
 Membership #: _____ (Assigned by the Cooperative)