



The cooperative purchasing company
for independent residences at MIT

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POTENTIAL MEMBERS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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What is the FSILG Cooperative, Incorporated?

The FSILG Cooperative, Incorporated (FCI) is a purchasing company organized by the independent living groups at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. We contract with vendors to improve the quality, and reduce the cost, of goods and services purchased by our (currently 31) members. The shareholders of the Cooperative (the FSILG members) elect the Board of Directors each year. The Board meets monthly and oversees the Cooperative. The Cooperative has two employees: an executive director and a bookkeeper.

Why should our house consider membership?

The Cooperative saves its members time, trouble, and money. FCI vendors commit to giving a higher level of service, and a better price, than they would give to an individual house. Our collective purchasing power and quick payment system provides vendors the incentives to participate in the system. In addition:

- Members benefit from having full-time staff looking after their interests. If a member has a problem with a vendor we can follow-up without having to worry about classes or other commitments.
- We provide high-resolution scans of all invoices (and estimates for large contacting jobs) available online indefinitely and hard copies kept in our offices for at least seven years.
- Treasurers only have to pay one consolidated bill each month instead of individual invoices, without losing any information because the invoices are available online
- The Cooperative also organizes information sessions for house officers and visits to vendors.

What are some specific examples?

- we located and delivered an insurance check for >\$20k that had been lost in interdepartmental mail
- when the heat failed in one of our member houses during finals week, we coordinated with the plumber & electrician to get the system repaired so the house had heat by dinner time
- one of our general contractors arrived within hours of major water damage and restored utilities the same day
- one of our members saved more than \$3000 last year on garbage pickup alone (and the average savings per house are \$150/month)

What can I buy through the Cooperative?

We would like members to be able to purchase all of their goods and services through the Cooperative. Some of our current offerings are general contracting, plumbing, rental cars, waste management, food delivery, electricians, florist, catering, and pest control. You can browse the full range of offerings in our Vendor Menu. If there is a good or service you would like us to add, or if there is a particular vendor you would like to recommend, please let us know.

How do members buy things?

Members order goods and services directly from vendors and do not need to submit a purchase order to the Cooperative (except for purchases over \$10,000). You would contact the vendor directly and place your order. Then the vendor delivers the goods (or services) to you and sends the invoice to us. We scan it and post it in your locker for your review before paying it.

How do we become a member? Can the alums & undergrads have separate accounts? Joint accounts?

All MIT FSILG are eligible to join. The steps are:

- The Cooperative is a member-owned Cooperative, so the first step is a purchase of a share for \$500. This share entitles the member to two accounts, which can be used for separate alum and undergrad accounts if desired (most houses use a single, unified, account).
- Second, each account requires a signed account agreement and a working capital deposit. The deposit should be sufficient to cover one month of expected expenditures, plus enough to cover the one week or two week payment period, and the exact amount is determined jointly by the Cooperative and the member.
- Third, each account must contacts and authorized purchasers and the appropriate names and contact information must be provided to the Cooperative.

How much does it cost?

There are no annual or monthly fees. The Cooperative does charge small fees for its optional add-on services such as employee payroll and utility payments services, but there is no markup on purchases made through Cooperative vendors, and vendors guarantee in their purchasing agreements that Cooperative members will not pay more than non-members.

What optional services does the Cooperative offer?

Our current offerings were created due to member demand and include:

- The Meal Delivery Program provides full dinners for less than \$9/person and bag lunches for less than \$5/person.
- The Employee Services Program is a way to outsource the logistics of employee management: payroll, workers' compensation insurance, health insurance, and SEP-IRA.
- The Utility Payment Program ensures that utility payments are timely to avoid late fees and service cutoffs.
- The Mail Retrieval Program provides a way to ensure that important mail is delivered to the address you specify and not lost in a box in W20.

How can I learn more?

Our website has a wealth of information available. You can also contact us by phone or email, and we are available for in person meetings at your convenience.