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The cooperative purchasing company
for independent residences

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL MEMBERS

What is the FSILG Cooperative, Incorporated?

The FSILG Cooperative, Incorporated (FCI) is a purchasing company organized by the Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living Groups (i.e., FSILGs) 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 members. Currently, thirty eight FSILGs are members of the Cooperative.

The shareholders of the Cooperative (the FCI 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 systems manager.

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.

Additional Benefits of Membership:

- Members benefit from having full-time staff looking after their interests. If a member has a problem with a vendor we can follow-up on their behalf.
- We provide high-res scans of all invoices (and estimates for large contacting jobs) which are available online indefinitely; hard copies are kept in the FCI office for at least 7 years.
- Member Treasurers only have to pay one consolidated statement each month instead of individual bills. Detailed information is easily accessible because both the statements and all invoices are available online.
- The Cooperative can also organize info sessions for house officers and visits to vendors.

Specific Examples:

- We located and delivered to a member 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 repairs with the plumber and electrician so that 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 \$3000.00 in one year on garbage pickup alone (the average savings per house are \$150.00/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, waste management, food delivery, electricians, 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 make purchases?

Authorized purchasers from member organizations contact vendors directly to place orders for goods and services. Purchase orders do not need to be submitted to the Cooperative, except for purchases over \$10,000.00. Vendors then deliver the goods/services to the members and send invoices to the FCI. New invoices are posted every Friday to the FCI website for member review, and members have until the following Tuesday to notify our office of any errors or questions. Vendor payments are sent out on Wednesdays for all member-approved invoices.

What optional services does the Cooperative offer?

Our current offerings are the result of member demand and include:

- Employee Services Program: the FCI will manage your outsourced employee payroll, workers' compensation insurance, health insurance, and SEP-IRA options.
- Utility Payment Program: utility bills are sent directly to the FCI ensuring that payments are timely and late fees and service cutoffs are avoided.

How do we become a member?

All MIT FSILGs are eligible to join.

- The Cooperative is a member-owned Cooperative, so the first step is the purchase of a share for \$500.00. This share entitles the member to two accounts if desired – separate alum and undergrad accounts – though most members use one combined 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- or two-week payment period. The exact amount is determined jointly by the Cooperative and the member.
- Third, each account must submit the names and contact information for primary organizational officers and purchasers 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 the Utility Payment Program, but there is no markup on purchases made through Cooperative vendors. Vendor agreements guarantee that Cooperative members will not pay more than non-members.

How can I learn more?

Besides browsing our website, you can contact us by phone or email. We are also available for in-person meetings at your convenience.