



## Verification Policy

.COOP is a restricted top-level domain (TLD) that is only available for registration to cooperatives and other organizations meeting the .COOP [eligibility criteria](#). DotCooperation LLC (DCLLC), the sponsor of the .COOP TLD, is required by its contract with ICANN to ensure that registrants meet the defined eligibility criteria. The aim of DotCooperation is to provide a namespace to the Global Cooperative Movement.

This verification policy provides the requirements for each of the Eligibility categories (as outlined in our Eligibility policy).

- (COOP) The organization is a democratically controlled member owned cooperative, consistent with the International 7 Cooperative Principles; or
- (CA) Is an Association comprised of cooperatives; or
- (CC) Is an Organization that is majority controlled by a Cooperative; or
- (CS) Is an Entity whose operations are principally dedicated to serving Cooperatives.

Verification is the process of assuring that all organizations registering and using a .coop domain name are eligible. DotCooperation does not consider, nor is it responsible for trademark ownership or related naming restrictions. However, DotCooperation will alert registrants if registration of a particular name is challenged through the DotCooperation Domain Name Dispute Policy which incorporates the UDRP. For DotCooperation, the sole verification task is to determine the eligibility of the registrant (the entity that has registered a .COOP domain name).

## Eligibility Categories and Verification Requirements

The .COOP eligibility policy states that the following organizations are eligible for a .COOP domain.

**(COOP) An organization that is a democratically-controlled, member-owned , and consistent with the International 7 Cooperative Principles**

While hundreds of thousands of organizations worldwide operate as cooperatives, the definition of a cooperative varies from country to country and from culture to culture. The following items serve as proof of eligibility or credentials for cooperatives, supporting the .COOP domain name Eligibility criteria.

- Proof of membership as a “cooperative” in a national or sectoral apex or other secondary or tertiary organization for cooperatives; or
- Governance documents, such as bylaws, which show the organization operates as a democratically-controlled, member-owned entity; or
- Corporate filings showing the organization was formed as a cooperative under applicable local law.

*For a cooperative organization that is still in-formation:*

- Draft versions of governance documents, such as bylaws, which show the organization is working towards incorporating as a cooperative
- Copies of incorporation documents submitted with local authorities, clearly showing that the organization will be incorporated as a cooperative. Note that updates from the registrant, regarding their status, will be requested by us every 6 months to ensure that the organization is still working towards formally incorporating as a cooperative

For a more detailed description on how DotCoop verifies Cooperatives (COOP), please see Appendix 1.

**(CA) An Association comprised of cooperatives**

- Internal documents outlining the registrant organization’s purpose
- A reference from one of the member-cooperatives of the association confirming that the organization is a legitimate federal body for cooperatives, a secondary or tertiary cooperative organization

**(CC) An Organization that is majority controlled by a Cooperative**

- Proof of the organization’s ownership structure: any documentation which proves the entity in question is owned by verifiable cooperatives
- Confirmation from one of the cooperatives referenced in the above document

**(CS) An Entity whose operations are principally dedicated to serving Cooperatives.**

- Examples of work carried out with cooperative organizations
- A reference from a cooperative with whom the organization has worked with, stating that the registrant organization works for the benefit of the cooperative movement

## Penalties for Falsification of Registration Application

Each .COOP domain registrant must actively accept the [Registration Agreement](#) of the domain name retail registrar where they register their .COOP domain. The [Registration Agreement](#) is included in the Terms and Conditions or Agreement that the registrant will be asked to sign by their .COOP domain name registrar. The [Registration Agreement](#) states that no refunds will be provided by DotCooperation for registrants that are found to be not eligible, per the DotCooperation [Eligibility Policy](#).

## Verification Fees

The cost of verification is included in the cost of .coop domain name registrations. DotCooperation will not pay any charges incurred by the registrant sending documents or other material to DotCooperation for proving their eligibility.

## Community Assistance

In order to address varying standards as well as communication issues that could arise in dealing with domain name registrations globally, the DotCooperation Verification process uses a variety of sources and contacts to assist in verification. These include:

- International Cooperative Alliance Global or their regional offices staff
- International Cooperative Alliance member contacts
- Cooperative apex organizations
- Cooperative references provided by registrants

This assistance is very useful in dealing with varying criteria around the world, even though DotCooperation has sole responsibility for the verification of registrants. Although DotCooperation uses the above contacts to assist in confirming information of particular cooperatives, this does not mean that any organization providing information is guaranteeing the validity of the registration or has been in any way delegated the responsibility of verifying the eligibility of the registrant. This responsibility always remains with DotCooperation.

## Inquiry-Based Verification

DotCooperation can initiate a review of a previously verified registrant based on inquiries from the wider Cooperative community that question the eligibility of that particular registrant.

DotCooperation will do an initial eligibility check and will update the status to Under Investigation to initiate the formal verification process, if eligibility is not confirmed.

An email is sent to the Registrant Contact alerting them to the initiation of the verification process.

## **Verification Process**

The process for verification is as follows. Throughout the process DotCooperation uses its resources as well as any additional information and contacts provided by the registrant to determine eligibility. Please note that all email communication noted below are between DotCooperation's Verification Team and the Registrant Contact email.

1. As soon as a .COOP domain name is registered by a new registrant the verification process is initiated and the registrant receives an email from DotCooperation asking them to provide the relevant documentation outlined under the Eligibility category, proving that they are eligible for their .COOP registration. The registrant will have two (2) days to respond to DotCooperation with the information required to determine their eligibility.
2. If the registrant's eligibility is verified, an email confirming eligibility is sent to them confirming this.
3. If DotCooperation cannot confirm the registrant as eligible or the registrant fails to respond to the initial email from DotCooperation requesting information, the registrant is sent another email informing them they have 30 days to provide the above or any additional information to help confirm their eligibility.
4. If DotCooperation does not get a response to the email requests for information within the 30-day period, DotCooperation will place the domain name under serverHold, preventing the DNS from resolving.
5. If additional information is supplied within the 30-day response period, then DotCooperation will re-evaluate the organization's eligibility. If it is then confirmed that the registrant is eligible, the verification status is set to Verified and any serverHold's imposed will be removed from domains associated with the registrant. A confirmation of eligibility email is sent to the registrant.
6. If the cooperative is in-information, DotCooperation will accept draft documentation as outlined under the Eligibility Category section. Once this is received, DotCooperation will allow the registrants use of their .COOP domain for the next 6 months, pending further documentation confirming the organization's cooperative status. As soon as the registrant provides proof of their formal cooperative status, the organization will be verified, and a confirmation email is sent to the registrant.
7. If the information provided does not serve as sufficient information for DotCooperation to confirm eligibility, then additional information may be requested. After all information provided by the registrant is reviewed and DotCooperation determines that

the registrant is ineligible, then DotCooperation will notify the registrant of this determination by email.

8. If there is no dispute by the registrant to this determination of ineligibility by DotCooperation within 10 calendar days, the verification status is set to Refused and any names registered are revoked with no refund of registration fees regardless of any other grace period. An email notifying the registrant of the revocation is sent to the current registrant contact email address.
9. Once the verification status is set to Refused, the registrant record is marked as deleted and the names that were registered by that registrant are available for registration by others.

## **Appealing a Denial of Eligibility**

Registrants may appeal denial of eligibility. Eligibility appeals are governed by the DotCooperation Dispute Policy. Disputes for eligibility reasons must be sent to DotCooperation within 30 calendar days of the date that the registrant status was set to Refused and the notification of ineligibility was emailed. Once a dispute is initiated, the domain will be placed on reserve until the dispute is settled based on the processes defined in the Dispute. DotCooperation will abide by the results of the Dispute Resolution Process and implement any decisions as directed from that process.

## **Contact Us**

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact [support@nic.coop](mailto:support@nic.coop).

## Appendix 1 – How we verify Cooperatives (COOP)

The DotCoop Verification function is informed by the ICA's activities, research, or policies concerning the Cooperative Identity. Furthermore, DotCoop is linked to the work of the Cooperative Identity Advisory Group of the International Cooperative Alliance.

Whilst the legal framework for establishing a cooperative is not consistent, if at all formed, in all countries of the world, DotCoop is verifying its COOP users using the International Cooperative Alliance's statement of Cooperative Identity, the Principles and Values as well as the Guidance Notes. Below you can find some guidance on how DotCoop verifies the category of .coop registrants who claim to represent a Cooperative organisation.

**Adherence to the Cooperative Identity.** The ICA is the steward of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity, which defines Cooperative enterprise and guides the global movement. The first four Principles of the Identity describe the structural characteristics that distinguish co-operatives from other forms of enterprise. Please review these core Principles and respond to the following questions:

a) **Principle 1: Voluntary & Open Membership.** "Cooperatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination."

i) Questions:

(1) Is membership in your enterprise limited to the "users" of its services, which may be described purchase of goods and services (consumer or purchasing coop); throughput of production (producer co-op); or employment (worker co-op)? (Y/N)

(a) According to Principle 1, the answer here should be "Yes".

(2) Is there more than one member class or type of user (a multi-user or solidarity co-op). (Y/N)

(3) If you answered "Yes", please describe classes of membership: \_\_\_\_\_.

(4) Is membership in your cooperative voluntary and free from coercion? (Y/N)

(a) According to Principle 1, the answer here should be "Yes".

(5) Is your cooperative committed to anti-discrimination? (Y/N)

(a) According to Principle 1, the answer here should be "Yes".

b) **Principle 2: Democratic Member Control.** "Cooperatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner."

i) Questions:

(1) Are representatives regularly elected by the membership? (Y/N)

(a) According to Principle 2, the answer here should be "Yes".

(2) Are voting rights in your co-op allocated on the basis of one member, one vote? (Y/N)

(a) According to Principle 2, the answer here should be "Yes".

(b) If you answered "No" to the above, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_ .

c) **Principle 3. Member Economic Participation.** "Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership."

i) Questions:

(1) Is a capital contribution or annual fee required for membership in your cooperative? (Y/N)

(a) According to Principle 3, the answer here should be "Yes".

(2) Do members receive any compensation (e.g. interest) on their contributed capital? (Y/N)

(a) Most co-ops do not pay interest on member capital, but it is allowed by Principle 3.

(3) Is surplus allocated to members according to "use," e.g. purchase of goods and services (consumer or purchasing co-op); throughput of production (producer co-op); or labor contributed (worker co-op)? (Y/N)

(a) According to Principle 3, the answer here should be "Yes".

(4) If you answered "No" to the above, please describe how surplus is allocated: \_\_\_\_\_ .

(a) If surplus is allocated to members according to factors other than use or participation (e.g. investment or capital held), this is not a cooperative but rather a capital enterprise.

d) **Principle 4. Autonomy and Independence.** "Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy."

i) Questions:

(1) Is your co-op owned and controlled solely by its members as described above? (Y/N)

(a) According to Principle 4, the answer here should ideally be "Yes". However, there are cases where external, non-user organizations or individuals have an ownership stake (e.g. capital shares).

(2) If you answered "No" to Question 1 above, please describe any ownership of the cooperative exercised by non-members (e.g. government, non-profits, investors, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_ .

(a) Ideally, a cooperative is owned and capitalized solely by its members. However, in some cases there may be investment or ownership of shares by non-user organizations or individuals.

**(3)** If you answered “No” to Question 1 above, please describe any governance control exercised by non-members (e.g. government, non-profits, investors, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_ .

(a) Ideally, a cooperative is controlled solely by its members (the users of the enterprise). However, in some cases there may be some level of governance control exerted by non-members. The question is whether this control is at the level that undermines member control.

**(4)** If you answered “No” to Question 1 above, please describe how member governance control and cooperative autonomy are ensured: \_\_\_\_\_ .

(a) If any governance control is afforded to non-member interests (non-users), we would want to understand how members exert ultimate control of the cooperative and are able to ensure its autonomy from these interests.

## References:

ICA: International Cooperative Alliance (<https://ica.coop/>)

ICA statement on Cooperative Identity: (<https://ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>)