



2026 STUDY GUIDE



Sumter EMC
Your Member-Owned Electric Cooperative



The Washington Youth Tour is a leadership opportunity and educational experience like no other. Sponsored by local electric cooperatives like Sumter EMC, this trip is awarded to exceptional high school students who compete for a chance to tour Washington, D.C. along with more than 100 other teens from across the state and more than 1,400 teens from across the country.

Congratulations! You've been selected to advance to the next stage of the application process. This study guide includes all the material that will be covered on the quiz you'll need to take prior to your interview.



World War II Memorial



THE YOUTH TOUR

HISTORY

In 1957, Lyndon B Johnson inspired the youth tour when he addressed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Meeting in Chicago. The Senator, and the future President, declared,

“If one thing comes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents.”

In 1964, an initial 400 students attended and that number has grown to having over 1,500 students each year. Since then, more than 100,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in this unique program.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

You have the chance to be selected to represent your state on the NRECA Youth Leadership Council (YLC). One student from each state is selected and they will come back to Washington, D.C. in July for a leadership workshop, which will focus on the electric cooperative industry. The purpose of the YLC conference is to build leadership and public speaking skills, and to enhance the delegates' knowledge of the energy industry and the cooperative form of business. Members of the YLC play an important role during NRECA's annual meeting the following spring. Not only are the YLC members recognized on stage, they have a hand-on experience with virtually every facet of the meeting including resolutions process and helping our members communicate with their legislators.



RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

In the 1930s for-profit electric utility companies refused to serve rural areas because they claimed they couldn't make money. When utilities did provide electricity to rural areas, they required customers to pay the cost of extending power lines, roughly a year's annual income at the time. Afterwards, rural customers often had to pay double the price for power than urban customers paid. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Federal Rural Electrification Administration in 1935 as part of his New Deal. Electric cooperatives soon sprouted across the nation, formed by members, for members. Folks paid \$5 to be a member and co-ops secured loans from the government to start operations. Part of what sets co-ops apart from the larger Investor Owned Utilities is that EMC'S are member- owned and not-for-profit. This means that any revenue that is collected after covering operating costs is returned to the members in the form of capital credits based on each members energy usage for a given year. Sumter EMC typically refunds capital credits in December. Today, rural electric cooperatives provide electricity to more than 42 million Americans across 48 states. There are 41 electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) in Georgia. These member-owned utilities serve roughly 4.4 million Georgians and cover 73% of the state's land area.

WHAT IS AN **ELECTRIC CO-OP?**

An electric co-op is a private, non-profit company whose purpose is to deliver electricity to its customers or members. As a cooperative, we are required to fulfill two requirements including reinvesting revenue into our service area communities through stable rates and infrastructures or returning it to members through patronage capital. Cooperatives are also required to operate using a model of democracy. Cooperative membership is a powerful thing. It means you have an energy source you can trust to look out for you and your community's best interests, not its own bottom line. We exist to meet our members' needs. The Cooperative Difference is how we treat our members, how we collaborate, and how we support community. The difference is clear. We take pride in offering electricity and other services to our members.

THE STORY OF **SUMTER EMC**

In May 1937, a small group of farmers met at the Sumter County Courthouse. Following directions received by mail and provisions of a new Georgia law, they organized the Sumter Electric Membership Corporation. Seven men were present at that first meeting: G.E. Daniel, Rufus Chappell, J.C. Wise, Jr., G.L. Mathews, L.C. Hodges, County Agent J.K. Luck, and Attorney R.L. Maynard - the first five were farmers. They formed the Board of Directors and elected Mr. Daniel president and Mr. Hodges secretary. County Agent Luck assisted the new Board and served on practically every committee. Attorney Maynard guided them through securing a state charter and drawing up loan papers to meet the federal government's rigorous requirements. Hungry for a better life, they applied for an initial loan of \$72,000 to be repaid in monthly installments over 25 years with an interest rate of 2.73%.

SUMTER EMC GOVERNANCE

Sumter EMC is governed by an elected board of directors who represent our members in the business of the co-op. Sumter EMC is based on a "one member, one vote" standard. We encourage members to be active in the cooperative by attending annual meetings, voting in cooperative elections, staying informed about current events and trends in the energy industry, speaking to cooperative leadership about concerns, and even contacting elected government officials to voice ideas and concerns about public policy in the energy industry.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The board of directors of a co-op, who are members of the co-op and live within the service territory, makes important strategic decisions for the organization, while the operations (day-to-day running of the business) is entrusted to the CEO and employees. They live and work in our community, and they want the best quality of life for their families while preserving the integrity of small-town life.

KEY PEOPLE IN A COOPERATIVE



ANNUAL MEETING & MEMBERSHIP

Once a member pays the \$5 membership fee, they become a part owner of the cooperative. They have a voice in how the cooperative is operated and influence this process through casting their vote at the annual meeting.

Annual meetings are a tradition at electric cooperatives - a tradition that celebrates our unique business model and brings members together to share the many ways we work to serve their current and future needs. Our bylaws require Sumter EMC to hold a meeting of members once a year.

Each year in August, Sumter EMC holds its annual meeting to keep the members informed of co-op news and active in the business of the co-op by voting their board of directors. The annual meeting is also an opportunity for members to hear about their cooperative's financial condition, business programs, and plans for the future.

Sumter EMC members are part owners of the cooperative, not customers, so we work for them and look out for their best interests. We strive to help members better understand their power bill, manage energy usage to control their costs, and provide the tools and services to make their life easier. As a trusted energy partner, we listen to our members' needs and respond accordingly. We are constantly looking for the best, most economical ways to improve our service while supporting education and economic development in our communities.





SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

These principles ensure that electric cooperatives remain focused on serving their members' needs and enhancing the community's well-being, while also promoting fair and democratic governance. The goal is not just to provide electricity but to foster a sense of community ownership and participation in the cooperative.



UNDERSTANDING THE SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Cooperatives around the world operate according to the same set of core principles and values, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance.

These principles are a key reason why America's electric cooperatives operate differently from other electric utilities, putting the needs of our members first.



1 VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a cooperative is open to all people who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender or economic circumstances.



2 DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (directors/trustees) are elected among members and are accountable to them. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote); cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.



3 MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative; setting up reserves; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.



4 AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.



5 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Education and training for members, elected representatives (directors/trustees), CEOs and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Communications about the nature and benefits of cooperatives, particularly with the general public and opinion leaders, help boost cooperative understanding.



6 COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

By working together through local, national, regional and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies and deal more effectively with social and community needs.



7 CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.

THESE ARE
THE WORDS
WE LIVE BY.

 **NRECA**
America's Electric Cooperatives

ADVANTAGES OF AN ELECTRIC CO-OP



- Return of Capital Credits
- Investing Revenue into our Service Area
- Stable Electric Rates
- Members Have a Vote in Co-op Business
- Community Focused
- Trusted Energy Advisor to our Members



Good Luck!



INTERVIEWS
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8:30 AM to Noon

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