

Neighboring Food Co-op Association

Northeast Startup Food Co-op Workshop Day:

The Future is Co-operative!

May 16th, 2020 // Virtual Webinar

AGENDA FOR THE DAY

	Time	Min	Topic	Detail & Outcome
1	9:45 – 10:00	15	Gather & Settle In	Arrive (from another room in your house) with some coffee, tea, muffins, smoothies, (whatever is for brekkie at your house) etc. catch up & settle in.
2	10:00 – 11:00	60	Welcome & Introductions: Who's in the Room & Community Organizing Assessment	Welcome! Hosts and representatives from each co-op will briefly introduce themselves. Startups share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage of Development • Number of member-owners • Share the area that stood out to you (either a strength or area that needs attention from your Co-op) from the Community Organizing Assessment
3	11:00 – 12:30	60	Startup Organizing in Our New Normal with Bonnie & Jacqueline	Coping and reorganizing: how to approach member-ownership growth and co-op development through a community organizing lens in this "new normal."
4	12:30 – 12:45	15	Group Photo & Wrap Up	Wear your start-up t-shirts, bring membership brochures, lawn signs, or stickers for the photo.

FOOD CO-OPS BUILD ON LOCAL SKILLS & ASSETS



Urban Greens Co-op Market, Providence, RI, opened in 2019!

Food Co-op Organizing is Community Organizing!

- Food Co-ops bring people together to identify mutual needs and create solutions, together.
- They build on local skills and experience, and strengthen community participation.
- Co-op Members do not just share in the ownership of their local grocery store – they use the business to meet their shared needs and build community.
- More than 12,000 people joined their local Food Co-ops in 2019, alone!

*2019 data based on Neighboring Food Co-op Association member survey.



Neighboring Food Co-op Association
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How can you make your case during a pandemic? Focus on how food co-ops contribute to stronger communities and rebuilding resiliently. Here are some examples of how food co-ops build community resilience with examples of your Neighboring Food Co-ops' collective impact on our region last year (2019).

FOOD CO-OPS FOCUS ON MEETING MEMBER NEEDS



Food Co-ops serve their Members — the people who use the business to meet their needs!

- Profits are reinvested in the business and its community, rather than in financial returns for investors.
- \$4.9 million distributed to Members in discounts and patronage rebates.
- \$729,000 in additional discounts distributed to people on limited incomes.
- \$789,000 in donations to community organizations.



GreenStar Food Co-op, Ithaca, NY.

*2019 data based on Neighboring Food Co-op Association member survey.

FOOD CO-OPS BUILD GOOD, LOCAL JOBS



Your Neighboring Food Co-ops employ more than 2,300 people!

- More than 60% are employed full-time.
- 67% of Employees are also Members, sharing in the ownership of their local Food Co-op.
- Our Food Co-ops distribute \$3 million in employee discounts every year.



Monadnock Food Co-op, Keene, NH

*2019 data based on Neighboring Food Co-op Association member survey.

STARTUP WITH THE CO-OP DIFFERENCE

Erbin Crowell, Executive Director // Bonnie Hudspeth, Co-operative Development

Food Co-ops have been pioneers in food security and innovators in healthy, organic and natural foods, fairly traded products, bulk buying, consumer education, and building local economies. Today's Startups face increased competition from retailers offering many of the same products that co-ops helped establish. As food co-ops, we have a unique advantage: **Our Co-operative Identity**. How will your Startup be an excellent grocery store, competing successfully with mainstream markets, as well as an excellent food CO-OP, promoting your difference in a way that reinforces your competitive advantage in the marketplace? How will you make the case to prospective members that they should join? Why should local community organizations and policymakers support your effort?

Does your Startup have an **elevator speech**? How do you communicate what will make your Food Co-op different when it opens its doors? Here is a model that you can adapt for outreach in your community:

*"Our vision for a food co-op in our community is about making **great food more accessible** to everyone, but it is also about **building a more inclusive local economy**. Our co-op will be a different kind of grocery store — one that is **locally owned** by people **like you** who care about our **community, healthy, affordable food**, and supporting **good jobs and local producers**. It will be a great place to shop that **we own — together**. And because it will be owned by people who live here, our food co-op will be focused on **meeting our local needs**. **Everyone will be welcome** to shop at the co-op, and money will stay to the local community, not lining the pockets of faraway investors. And that's just the start! Our co-op is already part of a regional network of food co-ops that are locally owned by **over 150,000 people like you**. **Join today and help us get our doors open!**"*

Below are a few ideas to help your Startup Food Co-op engage your community on the Co-operative Difference in your marketing and messaging as you promote your effort. We welcome your ideas on how we can work together to increase our shared success. For more resources and ideas, visit our website: www.nfca.coop.

TACTIC	WHY?	HOW?
Messaging the Co-op Difference	People have lots of choices on where to buy their groceries. But a food co-op is different in that it is owned and governed by its Members — the people who shop there. This makes the co-operative business model very different from other enterprises. As a Member-Owned business, a co-op's core purpose is to serve member-defined needs and goals, rather than maximizing profit for investors. Using accessible co-op language in your messaging can help communicate what is unique about your effort and how you are part of a movement focused on building a more democratic, inclusive economy. Other businesses may offer similar products and services, but the Co-operative Principles and Values offer a way for you to promote your project in a way that communicates this difference.	Focus on using terms such as " Member " or " Member-Owner ," which communicate use, participation, and belonging, rather than conventional business terms such as "owner," "investor," or "shareholder" which describe profit-driven business models where owners control decisions based on the money they've invested. When promoting your co-op and its activities and events, consider how to align your message with the wider co-operative movement. For example, partnering with a local non-profit can be an expression of the Principle of "Concern for Community," member loan drives strengthen "Member Economic Participation," and participation in the NFCA is an expression of "Co-operation among Co-ops."
Incorporate Using Co-op Statutes	State legal statutes define how a business is owned and governed, and who benefits from its operation. They also determine how an enterprise may distribute net income and how it will be taxed. Co-ops are no different, and all states in the Northeast have statutes specific to the co-operative business model. By using these statutes to incorporate, your Startup will help to strengthen the Co-operative Difference.	Make sure that your startup has legal counsel that understands co-operative statutes and can give your Startup informed advice in its governance and operations. The NFCA can help connect you with legal expertise, guidelines for articles of incorporation and bylaws, and other resources. You can also review the NFCA's webpage listing co-operative statutes in our region (http://nfca.coop/startup).
Emphasize the "Co-op" in Your Startup's Name	There is renewed interest in co-operative business and studies show that consumers have a positive image of co-ops — even if they aren't sure what a co-op is! Emphasizing "co-op" in your Startup's name is an opportunity to set yourself apart from the other "markets," "groceries," and online retailers that you will be competing with. Promoting your store proudly as a " food co-op ," " co-op market ," or " co-op grocer " is a simple way to set your effort apart while encouraging consumers to think of your Food Co-op as part of a system or whole that benefits the entire region, rather than as an isolated business.	If your Startup does not currently use " co-op " in its name, consider incorporating it into your name, logo, and messaging. If you already do, explore ways to raise its visibility within your logo and other branding. Remember that any inaccurate perceptions of the word "co-op" that you encounter are also an opportunity for education, engagement, and promoting increased understanding of the Co-operative Difference. It is also a chance to emphasize that, while we share certain values and principles, all co-ops are unique, responsive to their communities, and driven by meeting their Members' needs.
Use ".coop" for your Internet Identity	The internet is probably where our co-ops are "seen" by the most consumers — and especially by young people in our communities. The ".coop" url makes it easy to promote our Co-operative Identity online , in e-mail communications, and in social media.	If you do not yet use the .coop domain , you can now apply and get your first year free. Many food co-ops to use a format for their url that links "food" and "coop": for example, "monadnockfood.coop." https://domains.coop/
Use Social Media to Link Up with your Neighboring Food Co-ops	Social media is an easy way to for your Startup to share information on your efforts and communicate the impact of co-ops across the economy. The participatory aspect of such platforms is a good match for Co-operative Values, and an opportunity to link up with other Food Co-ops as well as farmer and worker co-ops, housing and artist co-ops, and credit unions in your area.	Emphasize co-op messaging in social media , and use hashtags such as #Coop, #GoCoop, #TodayAtTheCoop. "Like" the NFCA's Facebook page and follow us on Twitter, and share news and posts from other food co-ops, co-op associations, and other co-ops in your region. https://www.facebook.com/Neighboring https://twitter.com/NeighborCoops

<p>Use the Co-op Marque in Materials</p>	<p>Using “co-op” imagery in marketing and materials promotes our shared identity while communicating the diversity, scale, and breadth of the co-operative movement. The Twin Pines are commonly used in the Americas as a symbol of co-operative enterprise. In 2013, the ICA launched its Co-op Marque (above) as a simple and effective tool for promoting the Co-operative Identity across sectors on a global level.</p> 	<p>The Co-op Marque provides a new opportunity to generate interest in co-operative enterprise. Once you have obtained your .coop url, you can also apply to use the Co-op Marque on marketing materials, in ads, websites, etc., at http://identity.coop. In addition to existing slogans such as “co-operative enterprises build a better world,” you can create your own, such as the logo the NFCA created for our Healthy Food Access program (above).</p> 
<p>Fundraising & Outreach Events</p>	<p>By fundraising with co-op products, your Startup can raise funds and promote the co-operative difference at the same time. Members and prospective Members will better understand the kinds of products you plan to offer, learn more about the scale and success of co-ops across the food system, and link this to your effort to launch a Food Co-op.</p>	<p>Many co-ops in our region have fundraising programs and offer sample products for events and member incentives, including: Cabot Creamery Co-op (Cheese), Equal Exchange (Coffee, Tea, Chocolate), FEDCO (Seeds, Bulbs, Gardening Supplies), Organic Valley (Cheese). Contact us for more information.</p>
<p>Unique Member Benefits</p>	<p>It can be challenging to recruit Members based only on a vision for a food co-op that will exist in the future. While it is crucial to stay focused on opening your store, your Member recruitment efforts can benefit by providing incentives for new Members that are part of a wider vision of a more healthy, just, and sustainable food system.</p>	<p>Incorporated NFCA Member Startups can offer to new members a special discounted membership of just \$15 in the New England Farmers Union that includes a range of exclusive discounts and benefits, and connects them with food system advocacy in our region. For more info, visit: www.newenglandfarmersunion.org.</p>
<p>Community Education</p>	<p>Despite our impact, Food Co-ops are often overlooked by educational institutions, community development non-profits, local government, and in dialogs on food systems and the economy. Your Startup effort can benefit from educational events and outreach on the co-operative movement and benefit in the process by reinforcing your difference and contribution to your local community.</p>	<p>Share educational materials with local organizations and offer to do a presentation at a local event on the co-op movement. The NFCA worked with the New England Farmers Union to develop a youth & adult education curriculum, “Co-operatives: The Business of Teamwork.” This and other resources and ideas are available at: http://www.nfca.coop/go</p>
<p>Celebrate International Co-op Day...</p>	<p>The International Day of Co-ops, celebrated by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) and the United Nations on the First Saturday of July of every year, is an opportunity for outreach and events. Recent themes for the day include: Youth Empowerment, Food Security, Confronting Climate Change, and Inclusion.</p>	<p>Every year, the NFCA provides materials and a customizable press release on the theme of Co-op Day to help you promote your startup effort and connect with what co-ops are doing around the world. You can also e-mail us to let us know what you have planned so we can help spread the word.</p>
<p>...and Co-op Month!</p>	<p>October is Co-op Month in the US and a great opportunity for your startup to promote the Co-operative Identity that we share with other co-ops and credit unions. Each year, NCBA invites co-ops to coordinate their marketing around a special theme to increase our impact.</p>	<p>The NFCA will help your Startup celebrate with “Go Co-op!” materials and press releases based on the annual Co-op Month theme to help you promote your effort, along with other co-ops across our region. Let us know what you have planned so we can help spread the word!</p>
<p>Promote our Shared Impact</p>	<p>Most people do not realize the profound impact that Food Co-ops have on the regional food system and economy. Your Startup can strengthen its case to potential members, supporters and community organizations by sharing examples of successful Food Co-ops and our shared impact on the regional food system and economy.</p>	<p>Together, the NFCA includes over 35 Food Co-ops and Startups, locally owned by over 150,000 members — 13,000 of whom joined in the past year — and employing more than 2,300 people. With over \$340 million in shared revenue, our co-ops sell more than \$90 million in local products. Your Startup can use this data to promote how your effort is part of something even bigger: www.nfca.coop/about.</p>
<p>Go Co-op!</p>	<p>Our Co-operative Identity not only makes us unique, it is also a powerful tool for business success. The better potential Members and supporters understand the Co-operative Difference and the impact of co-ops and credit unions across economy, the more committed they will be to your success. This increased loyalty can be an important advantage in a competitive marketplace once you open your doors.</p> 	<p>The NFCA’s “Go Co-op” initiative has been recognized by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) as an example of how co-ops can work together to communicate our difference. See the NFCA’s “Go Co-op” page www.nfca.coop/go for ideas on how you can be involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with a local Credit Union on a Membership drive; • Organize a study group for Members around a book specifically on co-ops; • Organize a small group dialog at your Annual Meeting on the Co-operative Principles or Values; and • Integrate the Co-operative Identity into your co-op’s governing documents, mission, and ends policies.
<p>Exercise Your Sixth Principle!</p>	<p>The 6th Principle of the Co-operative Identity recognizes that “co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.” As the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) notes, “creating federations that leverage scarce resources whilst respecting the identity of smaller members is key to and the intention of this 6th Principle.” Through the NFCA, existing Food Co-ops and Startups are working together to share knowledge, resources, and innovations to support the next wave of Food Co-ops in the Northeast.</p>	<p>As a regional federation of Food Co-ops and Startups, the NFCA is an expression of the 6th Principle and the efforts of our Members to support shared success, co-operative development, education, and advocacy. By attending NFCA trainings and events, using our educational materials, and promoting our shared impact, your Startup is not only accessing tools to support its own success, but is contributing to our efforts to advance our vision of a “thriving co-operative economy, rooted in a healthy, just and sustainable regional food system.” Thank you for your participation and collaboration.</p>

FOOD CO-OPS ANCHOR WEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY



*We THANK
all the DEVOTED
men and women
who keep our
market moving
forward amidst so
much change.*

URBAN GREENS CO-OP IS COMMUNITY

*We are so grateful to our staff,
volunteers, farmers, producers,
suppliers, owners & customers.
Shop safe.*

Urban Greens Co-op Market, Providence, RI.

*2019 data based on Neighboring Food Co-op Association member survey.

Food Co-ops are Community-Owned!

- Because they are rooted in the community, Food Co-ops will not leave in search of higher profits.
- Co-ops are democratically governed and therefore very difficult to buy out.
- Your local Food Co-op is a community asset, owned by and accountable to the community!

Thanks to our sponsors and partners for making this event free to our Startup Members.

Special thanks to Food Co-op Initiative for helping us to plan the day and to Jacqueline Hannah (Food Co-op Initiative) for presenting and helping create the ongoing tools and guidance to support the success of our Startup Food Co-ops!



www.cabotcheese.coop



www.cdf.coop



www.fci.coop



www.monadnockfood.coop

The key to a co-operative is the relationships that it cultivates and embodies....

A co-operative is defined by, and draws strengths from, its relationships.

Brett Fairbairn, professor, University of Saskatchewan specializing in democratic governance and history.
Three Strategic Concepts for the Guidance of Co-operatives. Linkage, Transparency, and Cognition. (2003)
