

Cooperatives are user-owned and user-controlled businesses formed to benefit a group of members. Cooperatives are designed to reward use, encourage users to commit to using the services, and encourage users to voice opinions about how the business is doing.

Cooperatives

- Provide a service or need in the community
- Improve bargaining power
- Reduce costs
- Obtain products or services otherwise unavailable
- Expand new and existing market opportunities
- Increase income

Benefits of Community Owned Grocery Store

- Preserve town's local character.
- Local ownership enables those who feel the impact of a decision to make decisions affecting the business.
- Through operating the enterprise, neighbors understand the economics of operating rural grocery store.
- Community-owned stores support local economies.
- Complement other local businesses.
- Access to food in community.

Source: Kansas State University Rural Grocery Store Initiative <https://www.ruralgrocery.org/resources/bestpractices.html>

Considerations in Exploration

- The Why?
 - What is the need that the community wants to address?
 - What is the community's vision?
Conduct community survey to evaluate community interest and vision
- Working Together
 - Are you willing to create overall plans together?
 - Are you willing to invest together?
 - Are you willing to make decisions together?
 - Is there a group of people interested and willing to invest the time and energy to start the business?
If the answer is yes, identify people (a steering team) to begin working on the feasibility.

Steering team members are expected to:

- Contribute to the exploration of a cooperative/multi-owner approach.
 - Reach out to community members to identify members of a potential cooperative.
 - Explore the various models, identify the most feasible model, and develop a business plan.
 - Listen to the potential members and represent the community/members in the process.
- The Concept
 - What is the Business Concept?
 - What type of understanding or awareness is needed to pursue the opportunity?
 - Is a co-op the best structure to address the need identified by the community?

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