

*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 Cooperative**

- 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 the cooperative.
- Community-owned cooperatives support local economies.
- Complement other local businesses.
- Access to services in community.

**Process**

- Exploring the Possibility and organizing
- Assessing feasibility and Planning
- Implementation

**Exploring the Concept**

- What is the Business Concept?
- What is the need (that you want) to address?
- What type of understanding or awareness is needed to pursue the opportunity?
- Is a co-op the best structure to meet our shared need?

**Willingness to Work Together**

- Are you willing to create overall plans together?
- Are you willing to invest together?
- Are you willing to make decisions together?
- Are there a group of people interested and willing to invest the time and energy to start the business?
- Do you need/want to have control of the business after it is formed?

*If the answer is yes, identify people (a steering team) to begin working on the feasibility. Identify roles and responsibilities in moving forward. Steering team members will be expected to:*

**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.

**For more information, contact:**

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