

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:

Cindy Houlden, Cooperative Development Specialist, choulden2@unl.edu or 308-293-6417

Charlotte Narjes, NCDC Director/Rural Prosperity Nebraska Extension Educator, cnarjes1@unl.edu or 402-472-1724