

*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 fulfill a 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/publications/Resources.html>*

### **Considerations in Exploration**

- The Why?
  - What is the need that the community wants to address?
  - What is the vision?
- Exploring 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 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?
  - 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.

### **For more information, contact:**

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