

# Cooperative Futures: An Overview

**Mission:** Cooperative Futures increases and enhances the visibility, understanding, knowledge, and use of the cooperative model and cooperative approaches for many economic endeavors.

**Vision:** Full realization of cooperation's vast potential.

**Organizational Values:** Values inherent in the mission, vision, and organizational design for Cooperative Futures include:

- Cutting edge innovation and sustainable change
- Responsible empowerment and shared decision making
- Inclusiveness and full engagement
- Practical and useful information and timely quality education

**Functions:** Cooperative Futures has four key functions:

- Research
- Application
- Advocacy
- Education

**Anticipated Outcomes:** Cooperatives Futures anticipates that its endeavors will produce these outcomes:

- Make cooperatives and cooperation central to major public policy debates and public policy decisions on all levels
- Produce research findings to better inform overall policy and practice
- Target and hone research efforts to address key cooperative issues with greater effectiveness, specificity, and timeliness.
- Spur and sustain the creation and growth of cooperatives on many fronts around the globe
- Advance information on many fronts (a) to spur cooperative innovation, (b) capture market opportunities, and (c) quicken responsiveness to real people needs
- Enhance the quality, effectiveness, and timeliness of education within the cooperative community
- Increase teaching and learning about cooperation's economic, social, and political components at all levels of public education
- Maximize coordination of cooperative endeavors and enhance mutual support and patronage of one another

**Next Steps:** Next steps to launch Cooperative Futures include: gathering in put and support from across the co-op community, securing funding streams and other resources, targeting bang-for-the-buck initial projects, creating an organization design to realize established objectives, and setting a launch date and place.

## THE COOPERATIVE INITIATIVE

### A VISION

#### A COOPERATIVE THINK TANK

To provide the **research and advocacy mechanism** that cooperatives now lack to get co-op ideas and innovations into the mainstream and thus produce major co-op components in **public policy** in such areas as:

- Worker-owned business
- Empowerment of marginalized people
- Senior services
- Accessible health care
- International co-op development
- Value-added & new generation co-ops

#### A NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF COOPERATION

**A world class entity with the requisite resource and staff capacity to serve as a hub for:**

- Developing and researching new cooperative approaches and innovations (including providing some of the research foundation to be utilized by the Co-op Think Tank.)
- Interdisciplinary research in all co-op sectors
- Coordination with regional co-op centers and institutes around the US
- Interface and partnering with similar co-op centers through out the world
- Close coordination with leadership of co-op sectors and their associations, national and state
- Strong on-going working relationships with the co-op development community
- Significant undergraduate, graduate, outreach and professional continuing education programs

#### Other Potential Components:

- **Regional Co-op Centers and Institutes** with specialized programs strengths which fit their regional needs/demand.
  - **Masters & PhD. Programs** in business, law, sociology, political science, economics all with a cooperative emphasis. This is a vital component if we are to refill the pipeline with new thinkers, doers and leaders in co-ops who have both the HOW and the WHY of co-ops imbedded within them.
  - A nationwide program of **cooperative graduate assistantships and scholarships** coordinated with cooperatives, co-op foundations and others.
  - **Cooperative Research Consortia** which can successfully compete\* for major research funding in health, senior care, minority enterprise, empowerment, community building, economic development, micro enterprise, international development and other arenas as well as provide coordination of research efforts.
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- **Voorhis\*\* Center for International Cooperative Studies** a top flight international center that could:
  - serve as a research, education and training resource to the entire cooperative CDO community;
  - help make co-op models a greater portion of international development programs
  - provide graduate and specialized resident instruction for international co-op leaders.
  - provide an interface/coordination with other international programs with similar goals and values.
- **Career and Professional Development Programs in Cooperatives** to greatly expand the cooperative specific education and development of cooperative executives, leaders and elected leaders. (e.g. CUNA School, Graduate Institute for Cooperative Leadership (GICL).
- **Cooperative Sectoral Roundtables** to provide ongoing mechanisms/platforms for co-op leaders to routinely focus on major issues and common challenges (The Davos or Carter Conversations Models).
- **Internet Education and Cooperative Awareness** to assist in the development and growth of internet-based programs with the potential to greatly expand access to and awareness of cooperatives and cooperation.

## RESOURCE NEEDS

- **Federal funding** of \$20,000,000\*\*\* in new funds spread over a number of federal departments and agencies... .HUD, HS&S, DOC, etc. (vs. sparse current funding which is limited almost exclusively to USDA and USAID funds)
- **State programs and matching funds** for co-ops similar to those used in many program areas
- **University support** expansion of long history of university-based co-op work to areas well beyond their traditional agricultural economics homes.
- **Cooperative community support of significant, regular investments of both core funding and special project support.** (e.g. Filene Institute for Credit Union Research)
- **Major foundation support** (e.g. Ford, Kellogg, PEW, Rockefeller)

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Witness the recent success of Canadian Co-op Institutes which have successfully collaborated to attract significant funding. Also note recent development of the international Cooperative Registry, a new online database of researchers and cooperative publications, as well as Co-op News from the UWCC.

An American consortium could also provide a useful and practical working link to the ICA Research Committee and similar international co-op research entities thus helping to make developments and information from around the globe more readily available to US cooperatives and academics.

Or Mandela or Kagawa, Carter or \_\_\_\_\_ Center

The National Rural Co-op Development Task Force and other efforts have helped result in a "rediscovery of co-ops" as an economic and community development tool and have recently attracted proportionate dollars to this activity.

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