

Réseau de recherche pour mesurer la
DIFFÉRENCE COOPÉRATIVE



Measuring the Co-operative Difference
RESEARCH NETWORK

Co-operatives and the Journey of Lifelong Learning

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Abstract:

This presentation provides the “lay of the land” in terms of how the 5th principle of co-operation is operationalized throughout the Canadian co-operative sector. This is a key illustration of the “co-operative difference” in terms of the investment made in the people involved in co-ops (the members, staff and directors) and more broadly business developers and the public. This presentation will share the trends emerging from the 170+ initiatives identified as well as the opportunities arising from this mapping exercise in terms of developing a lifelong learning strategy for the co-op movement.

Project goals:

- Explore the 5th principle of co-operation
- Scan educational and training initiatives across Canada by co-ops and/or for co-ops
- Explore the investment co-ops make in their people through education and training
- Inform practice (trends, gaps, inform the development of a co-op lifelong learning strategy)

Overview of findings:

- 170+ initiatives identified
- Training occurs throughout all sectors of the co-operative economy, but the highest amount of initiatives were found in financial co-ops in comparison to other sectors
- Delivered by primary, second tier and third tier co-ops as well as consulting bodies and universities
- Delivery methods ranged from online static resources to in-person courses, but in-person courses or workshops are the most common delivery method
- Initiatives targeted staff, management, directors, members, developers and the public (the top target audience is directors)
- Topics included co-op topics (such as co-operative management, the co-op difference, the co-op principles) as well as technical topics (such as financial literacy, leadership, sustainability)

Examples:

- Graduate Diploma in Co-operative Management at Saint Mary's University (Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada): 16-20 month program targeted at managers of co-ops/credit unions, in-person orientation, online courses, personal project
- Alberta Community and Co-operative Association's Internship Program (Alberta, Canada): minimum 12 weeks working in a co-op, 2 day orientation training on co-op business model as well as career skills, 15-30 years of age
- Lunch 'n' Learns on Business Succession Planning using the Co-op Model by the Co-operative Enterprise Council of New Brunswick: open to the public, 1 hour presentation
- National Young Co-operators Mentorship Program supported by the Canadian Co-operative Association (across Canada): One-on-one pairings of young people involved in the co-op movement with experienced people in the movement (matched on career/project compatibility), 6 month program, 18-35 years of age
- Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation Annual Conference (different location in Canada each year): 2.5 day research conference for academics, students and practitioners

Opportunities arising from the scan:

- Strategize about opportunities where co-ops and co-op associations should collaborate to build capacity within the sector, share resources, set common standards
- Gap between teen programs and adult education (opportunity to target business schools and college students)
- Public education and raising awareness of the model is a gap and potential priority
- Increase access to governance resources for all co-ops (including smaller co-ops) to increase governance standard and to avoid duplicating resources (online Co-operative Education Governance Portal in development)

Contributors:

- Karen Miner of Saint Mary's University
- Kim Penna of College Houses (Texas)
- Sarah Pike of ACE
- Fiona Duguid of CCA
- Quintin Fox of Gay Lea Foods (formerly of CCA)
- Provincial co-op associations

The paper will be available this fall at <http://www.cooperativedifference.coop/en/national-cluster/Research#N6> and maps illustrating these initiatives coming soon.