



FOOD CO-OP INITIATIVE

New co-ops start here.

The What and the Why of Food Co-ops





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New co-ops start here.



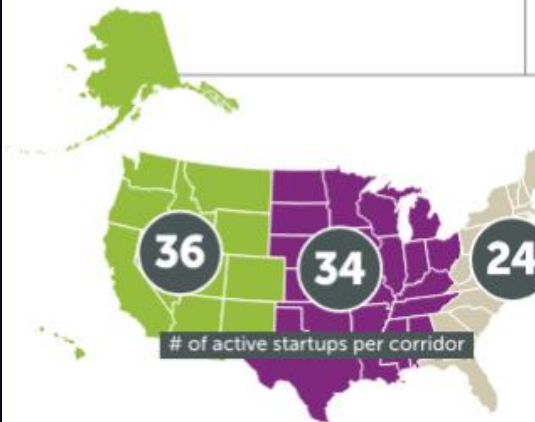
OUR IMPACT



We've been supporting startups for 19 years:
5 as Food Co-op 500 +
14 as FCI

"You're my first stop in gathering information on forming a food co-op and you are very informative!"
— recent email inquiry

of co-ops by stage:

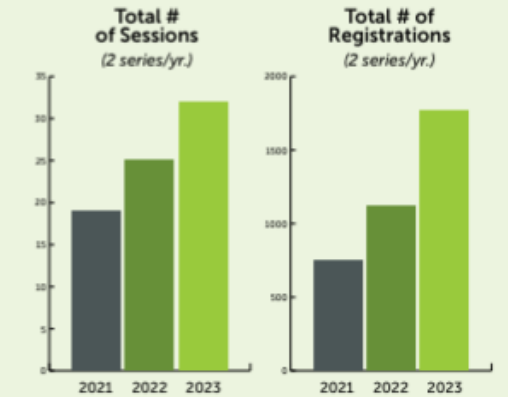


Of current startups, about 40% are in USDA rural communities and 60% in urban areas.



The FCI Live series showcased 32 sessions from cooperative experts and peer presenters. 2023 also saw a 57% increase in the number of registrations over last year — **the largest increase in the event's four-year history!**

"I am particularly grateful for the practical advice and tips you shared on how to build a strong and engaged community around the cooperative, as well as the resources you recommended for further learning. FCI's generosity and support have been incredibly valuable to me. I cannot thank you enough for your kindness and willingness to support us along the way."
— Cassandra Loftin, Goodness Gracious Grocery



▶ Nonprofit organization that supports those working to start food co-ops or transition grocery stores to the cooperative model across the US.

▶ Free online learning events and resources.

▶ www.fci.coop

So what is a **co-op** anyway?



Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op
Kodiak, AK
Population 5,433

What is a co-op?



Placerville Food Co-op

Placerville, CA

Population 10,664



A business model

In the US, it is a specific legal business structure where the people who use the products or services of the business own the business equally and democratically.



Nothing new

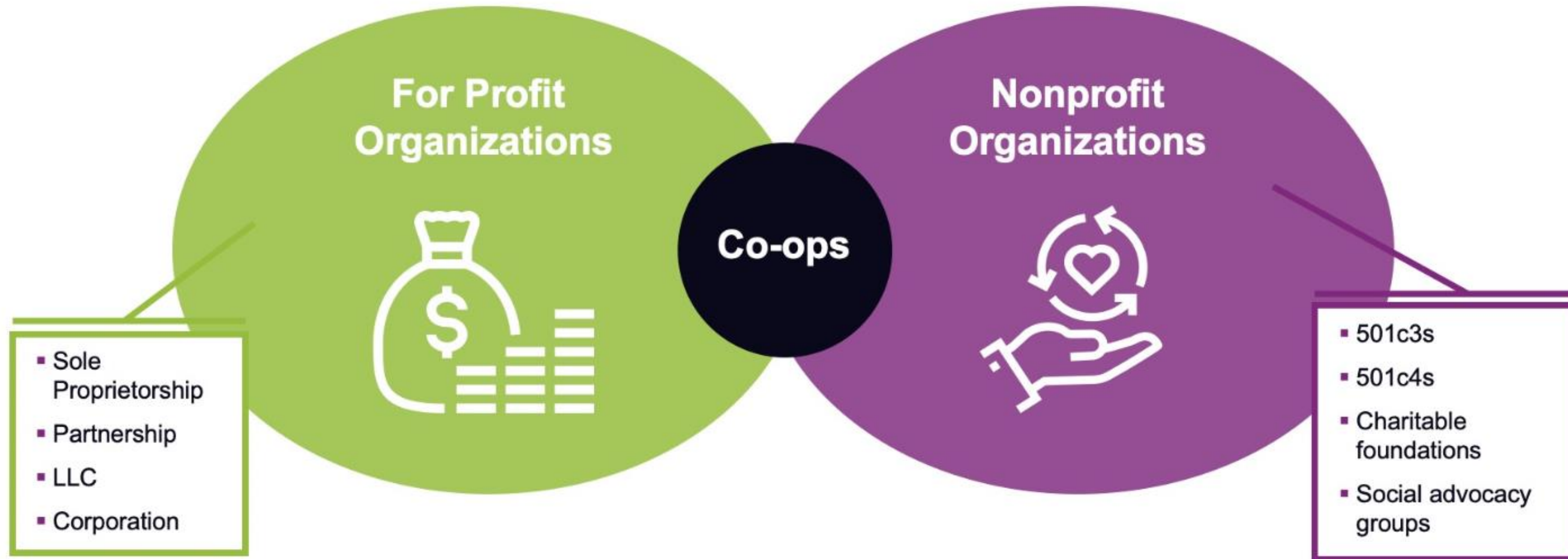
While the legal business model may only be hundreds of years old, cooperation is nothing new. Pooling our knowledge and resources to build solutions for our communities is a core human behavior.



A way to solve our own problems

Of producers, workers, and/or shoppers to create the solutions to their own needs by forming a business.

Co-ops are legal entities that balance the best of for- and non-profit business models



community

For ↓ profit.

All profits generated by the business must be reinvested in the business *or* paid out to all active co-op owners equitably.

Annual sales	\$2 million
Profit	\$40,000
# of owners	500

\$80 each



Cooperative businesses are economic engines for *community wealth*.

Communities build co-ops to solve a problem, meet a need, and/or create change. What that problem/need will be is unique to each community, but there are common threads.

== *Community profit*

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

These seven key ideas are a big piece of how co-ops are different than other business models, centering our members and community.



1. Voluntary and Open Membership



2. Democratic Member Control



3. Members Economic Participation



4. Autonomy and Independence



5. Education, Training and Information



6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives



7. Concern for Community

The Cooperative business movement in the US has many **sectors**.



Housing



Insurance



Services



Agricultural



Credit Unions



Utility



Retail

Food co-ops fit here.

So what is a *food* co-op?



Placerville Food Co-op

Placerville, CA

Population 10,644

What is a food co-op?



A grocery store

Generally, by “food co-op” we mean a grocery store that is open to the public for regular business hours, rather than cooperative buying clubs.



A self-sustaining business

Food co-ops run just like any other grocery business in most ways, and definitely have to be financially solvent like any other grocery store, they don't run on donation.



community

A for profit grocery store owned by the community.

Cooperative businesses are structured/owned in different ways

consumer

monadnock FOOD CO-OP
WHEATSVILLE FOOD CO-OP
Durham Coop Market
LANDEN HILLS CO-OP
OUTPOST NATURAL FOODS
PCC COMMUNITY MARKETS
MARIPOSA FOOD CO-OP
Wedge COMMUNITY CO-OP
BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP
Ozark Natural Foods
willy street co-op

worker

MANDALA GROCERY WORKER-OWNED COOPERATIVE
RAINBOW GROCERY A WORKER-OWNED CO-OP

producer

hybrid/solidarity

weaver street MARKET
central co-op

Maybe you thought of something like this?



Or something like this?



There are an estimated **300+** food co-ops in the US



From Hawaii to Maine

Food co-ops are thriving all across the US in all different kinds of communities, from major metropolitan areas to isolated rural communities, from tiny corner stores to large scale, full-service grocery stores. They are organized around the values *their* communities choose to focus on.

Food co-ops

Often organize around some combination of 2-4 of the values you see here, based on their community's needs:

- Creating **food access** in a certain area
- Supporting **local farms/local food** movement
- Creating **good jobs** rooted in their community
- Addressing **community health** through education, offering higher-quality foods
- Economic autonomy, **building community wealth**
- Creating “**third space**”, a community gathering place to build community connection
- **Localizing the economy**, keeping your \$\$\$ local
- Addressing **environmental concerns**/climate change, modeling better practices

Examples of food co-ops in rural communities:



Big Flat Grocery

Turner, MT

Town pop. 69 – County pop. 7,044

Conversion from existing store

Conventional product mix

Examples of food co-ops in rural communities:



Rise Community Market

Cairo, IL

Town pop. 1,611

New grocery store in old dollar store space

Conventional product mix



Examples of food co-ops in rural communities:



Yelm Food Co-op

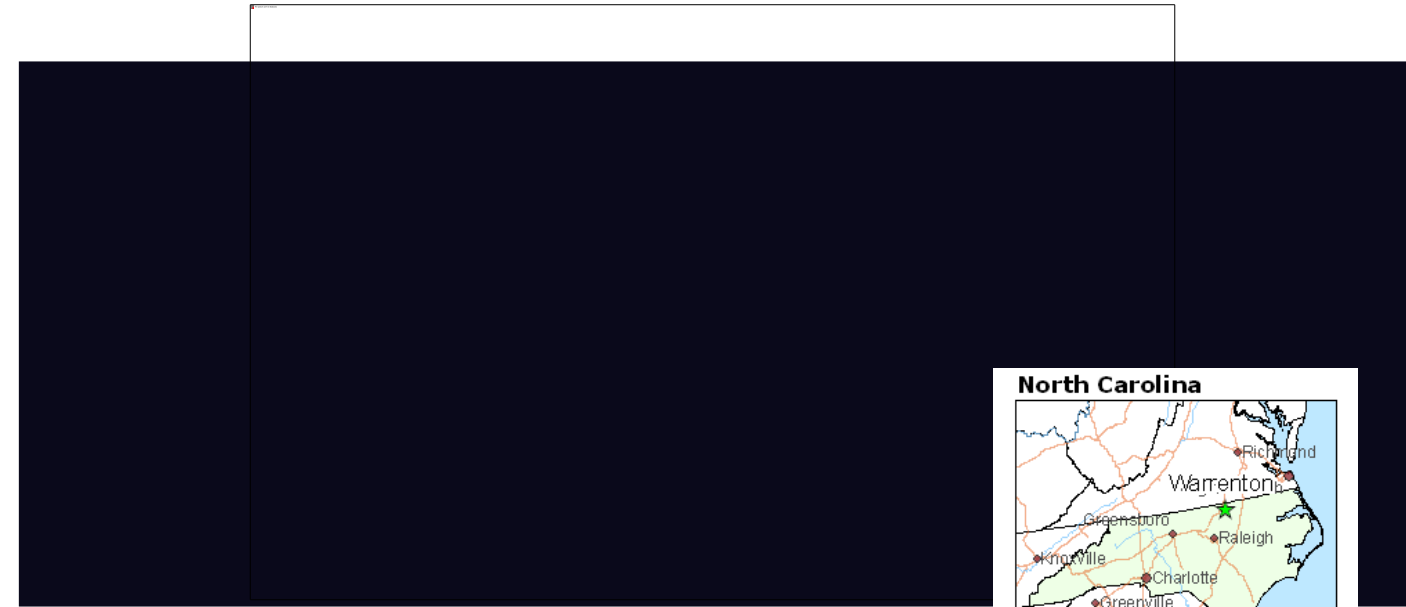
Yelm, WA

Town pop. 10,668

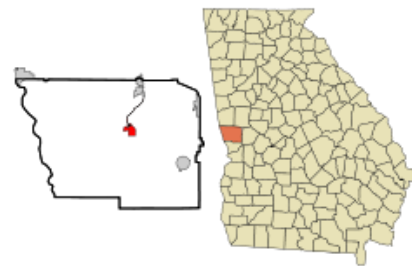
New grocery store

Organic/natural product mix

Examples of food co-ops in rural communities:



Mag's Marketplace
Warrenton, NC
Population 845



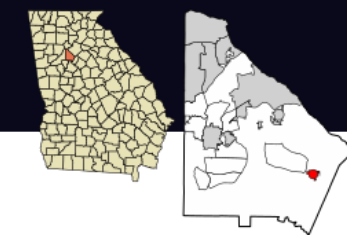
West Georgia Food Co-op

Hamilton, GA
Population 1,730



Green Love Kitchen

Lithonia, GA
Population 2,611



Why consider a food co-op for *your* community?



Littleton Food Co-op
Littleton, NH
Population 5,928



**Your values
centered**

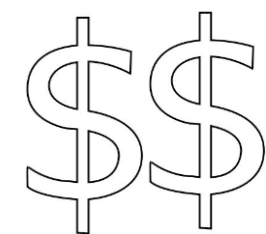


**Builds local
economy**



**Stays in the
community**

**More
successful**



Macomb Food Co-op

Macomb, IL

Population 14,857

Chains have 50% *failure* rate in LILA communities



Marsh River Co-op

Brooks, ME

Population 1,132

Study: “If you build it with them, they will come”

- <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pa.1863>

Article: “Why community owned grocery stores, like co-ops, are the best recipe for revitalizing food deserts”

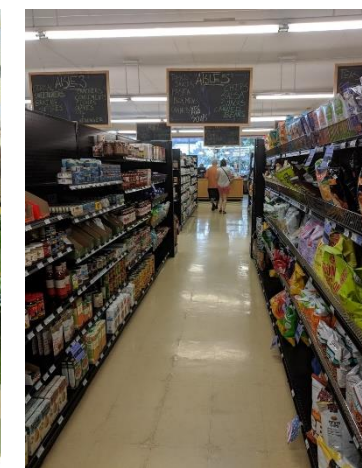
- <https://theconversation.com/why-community-owned-grocery-stores-like-co-ops-are-the-best-recipe-for-revitalizing-food-deserts-122997>

At least 71 supermarkets have opened in food deserts since 2000. Those driven by government or commercial interests had a mixed track record, but nonprofits and those driven by community involvement tended to succeed.

Type of project	Canceled	Opened then closed	Open today	In progress	Total
Government	2	5	14	0	21
Community	1	0	13	4	18
Government and community	2	3	4	3	12
Nonprofit	1	0	9	2	12
Commercial interest	1	3	4	0	8
<i>Total</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>71</i>

What are some of the *challenges* of the co-op model?

Lost River Market
Paoli, IN
Population 3601





**LOTS of
volunteer
hours**



**You'll need to
find grocery
expertise**



**There is no
perfect map**

**It often
takes years**

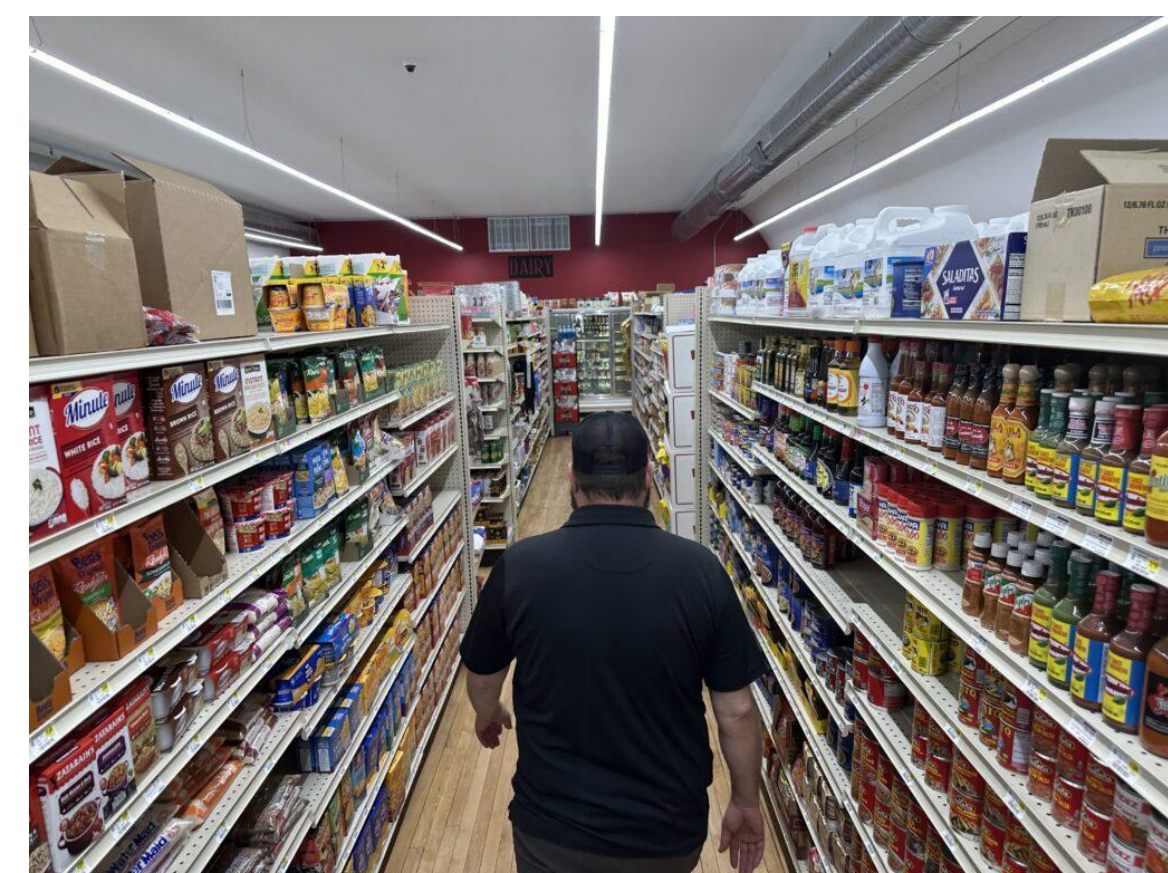


Ideal Green Market Co-op

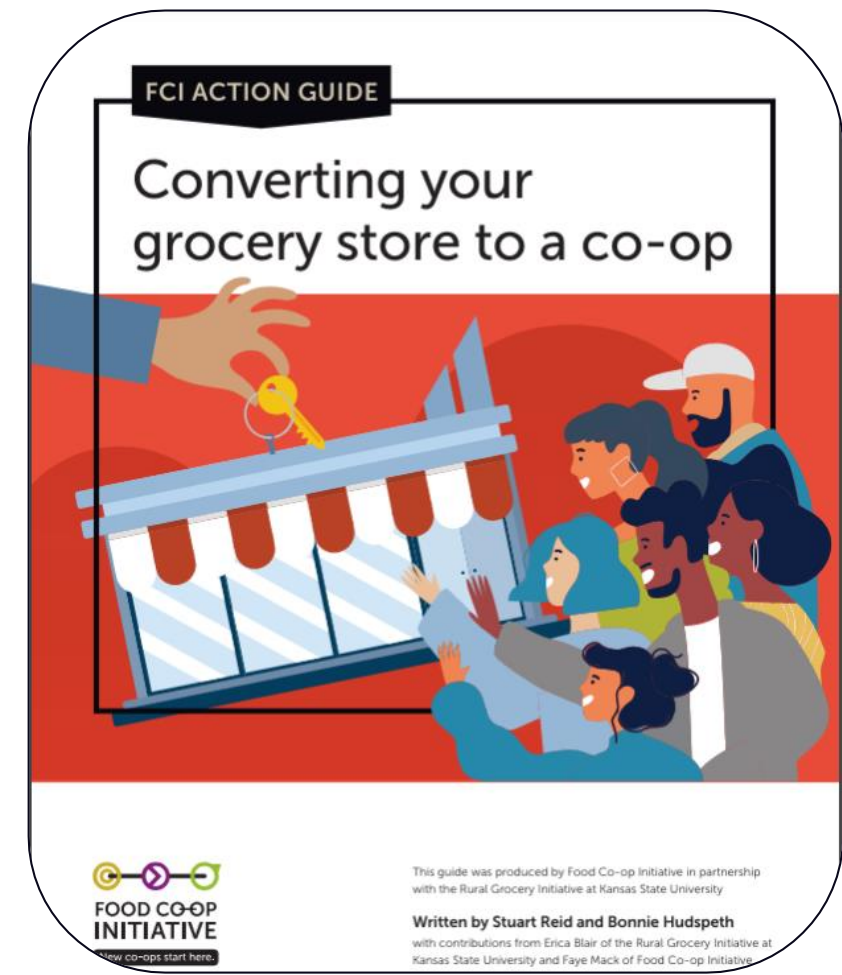
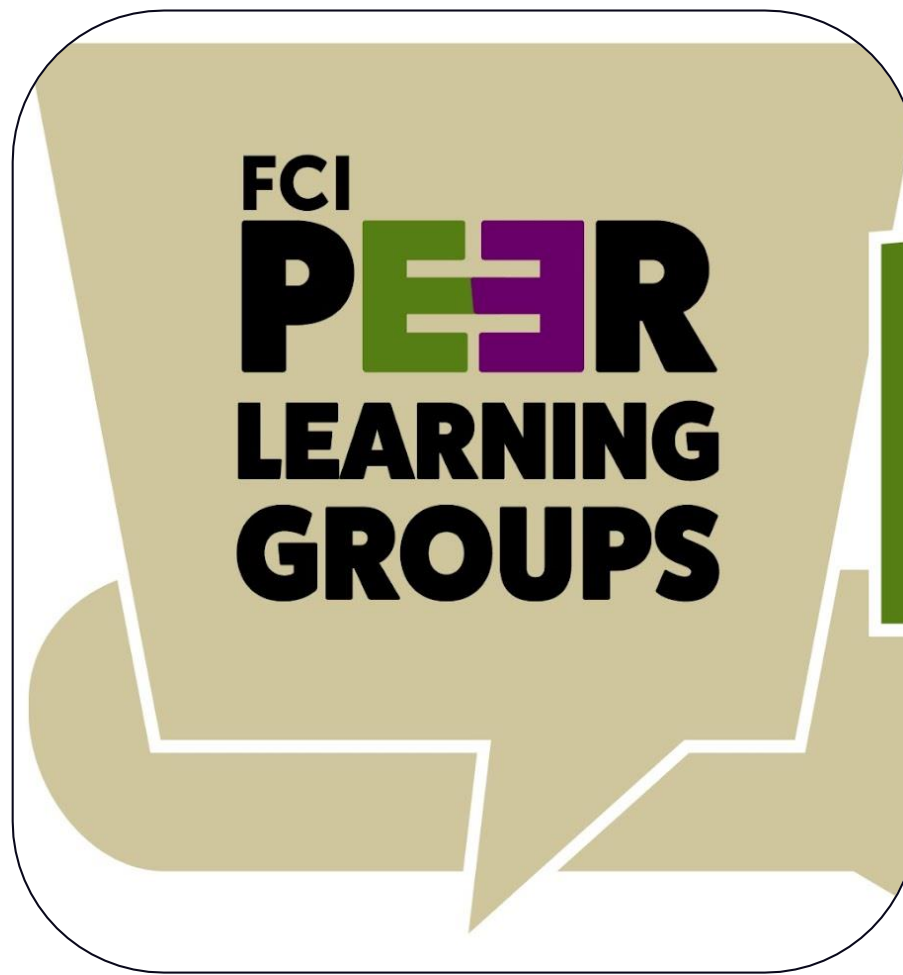
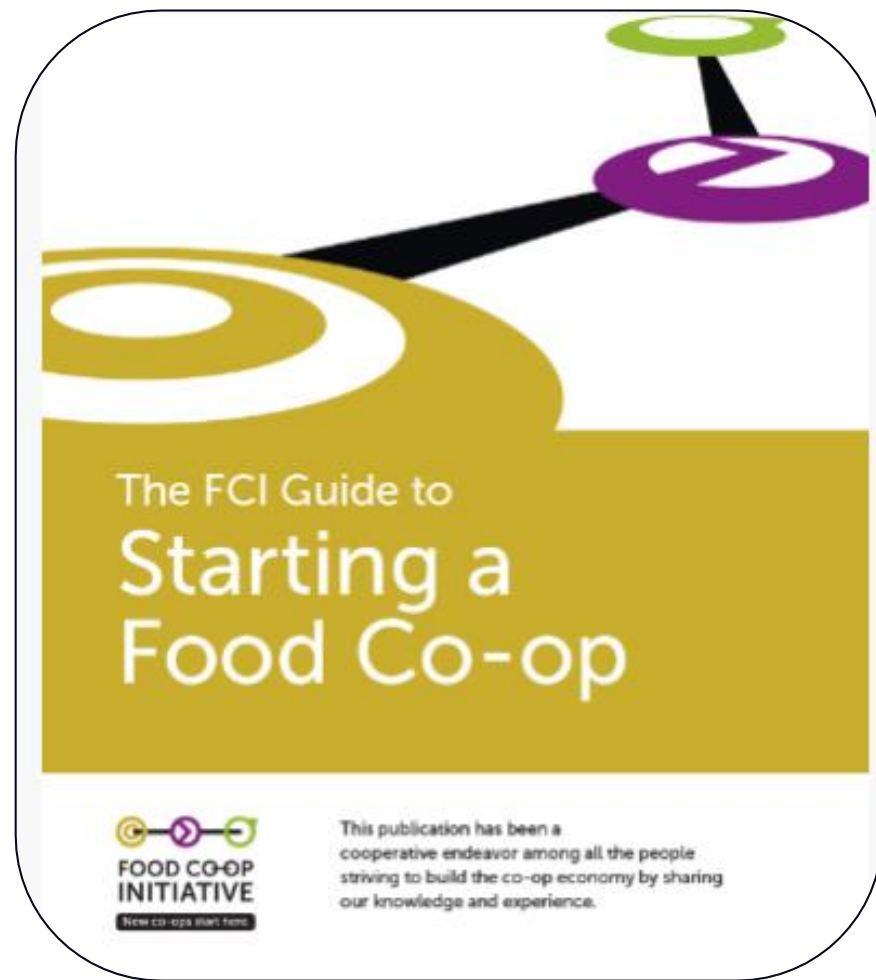
Pequot Lakes, MN

Population 2,440

Food Co-op Initiative *resources* and *support*



Post 60 Market
Emerson, NE
Population 798



our
contact info



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email

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website

www.FCI.coop

phone

844-324-2667

thank you.



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