This document on “Starting a Worker Cooperative: Developmental Stages” describes four fundamental stages of cooperative development based on our model at the Center for Family Life. Although each of these activities is essential, the order is not necessarily linear and the list is not exhaustive. We recommend that organizations interested in cooperative development first think about their model, including what services and support they can provide, what decisions they will make, and what timeline they have. We encourage you to start here and make it your own!
# Starting a Worker Cooperative: Developmental Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE 1</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>ROLE OF THE DEVELOPER</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-5 months</td>
<td>Research &amp; Ideation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | Develop Idea | - Survey interests, strengths and skills of community members.  
  - Brainstorm possible business ideas that fill a niche or are missing in the marketplace. | |
| | Feasibility Study & Market Research | - Conduct a study on whether your business idea will be “feasible” (target clientele, meeting the demands, etc.). | - Decide on a specific type of business. |
| | Gauging interest from community members | - Share information with potential members about potential to develop coop and assess their motivation and business ideas. | - Market research that shows there is a large enough market and sufficient product to sell that will make the coop financially viable and a significant economic contribution to its members. |
| | Research network & reach out | - Connect to NYC coop networks, industry advocacy organizations, attend trainings. | - Growing interest and commitment from potential cooperative members. |
| | | | - Building relationships & organizing context |
### STAGE 2: Recruitment, Decision Making and Business Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>ROLE OF THE DEVELOPER</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Cooperative Training for “Founding” members** | - Hold an Open House at your CBO.  
- Provide coop training to “foundings members” on coop principles, developing brand, learning basic skills for the type of service/product that will be sold, begin developing rules, etc. | - “Founding members” receive an initial snapshot of what it’s like to be in coop and what will be provided to client.  
- Sufficient members become invested in order to launch the cooperative. |
| **Build solidarity w/ social group work approach** | - Use icebreakers, team building, group sharing, anti-oppression, organizing around shared principles | - Coop members have unity and cohesion |
| **Determine how decisions will be made and by whom** | - Teach consensus decision-making and discuss workings of majority vote. Assist in deciding how to approach various decisions. Emphasize one member, one vote principle. | - Coop will have rules related to how they want to make decisions. |
| **Create a Business and Marketing Plan** | - Research the data and put together a document that specifies the aims and objectives of the coop. | - A document that outlines all of the specifications and objections of the planned business. |
Starting a Worker Cooperative: Developmental Stages

**STAGE 3**

**ACTIVITIES**

- Create Work Groups and Leadership Committee
- Set up Back Office of business
- Create Bylaws or Operating Agreement
- Incorporate Business
- Open Bank Account & Bookkeeping
- Develop marketing plan and materials
- Political Education Join coop & other networks

**ROLE OF THE DEVELOPER**

- Assist in determining organizational structure, election process, determining responsibilities, and teaching accountability.
- Set up office and hire an office manager.
- Introduce coop to attorneys, provide translation and guidance through process of decision making.
- Support coop while working with attorneys. Assist in getting appropriate paperwork and information (i.e. EIN)
- Assist with finding the right bank and getting signed up with a business account.
- Assist in getting marketing expert support, developing materials and a website.
- Build community, situate coop in other movements, ongoing education, market development

**OUTCOMES**

- Have a leadership committee and other work groups formed.
- An office is staffed and organized with appropriate protocol, and trainings are provided to office manager and members.
- Bylaws/OA will be completed at the end of this stage and will be used to incorporate business.
- Become a legally incorporated LLC or Cooperative entity.
- Have a business checking/savings account.
- Have a brand, marketing materials designed and printed, and a website.
- Coop has political analysis that builds unity, trust, resources within and between coops
Starting a Worker Cooperative: Developmental Stages

**Stage 4: Launching the Business (3-6 months)**

**ACTIVITIES**

- **Marketing Campaign**
  - Assist group to structure publicity groups, and enforce marketing hours and strategies.
  - Support coop in enforcing marketing skills they were taught through expert advice, assist in practicing pitch and approach with potential clients.
  - Assist with contacting media, spreading the word.

- **Implement “Back office management”**
  - Supervise office manager, provide support and training in customer service, utilizing documents, and problem-solving when issues arise.

- **Member Development**
  - Provide trainings, mediation, and support as members learn more about their roles and responsibilities.

**ROLE OF THE DEVELOPER**

- Coop members are actively doing publicity, following the marketing campaign strategy and enforcing publicity requirements.
- Have a high functioning “back office” that will work with members, clients, payroll (if needed), reporting, etc.
- Effective communication between office manager and cooperative members/office committee leaders.
- Continue to educate each other on product standards and client relations, management, etc.