

## CFL Cooperative Curriculum Overview

### Workshop topics by category for initial coop training

Coop Work	Group Work	Business Development	Industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•What is a worker coop</li><li>•Principles and values</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Communication skills</li><li>•Decision-making</li><li>•Anti-oppression</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Management and Governance</li><li>•Business Model Canvas</li><li>•Business financials</li><li>•Customer Service/Back Office</li><li>•Branding (name, logo, website)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Overview</li><li>•Hard skills</li></ul>

*\* These topics are intended to provide an overview and introductory training: Cooperatives will continue working on each of these areas following the initial training and through the maturity of the business.*

### Additional training workshop ideas (pre, post, or additional)

Miscellaneous
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Incorporation</li><li>•Bylaws</li><li>•Sales</li><li>•Developing Contracts</li><li>•Back office Part 2</li><li>•Political education</li><li>•Movement building</li><li>•Financial management</li></ul>

## CFL Cooperative Curriculum Overview

The following are the sessions that the Center for Family Life has used as part of its Worker Cooperative Curriculum. Each worker cooperative is different; therefore all the sessions below are tailored –in activities and their order, to the industry the cooperative will be a part of and the group itself.

### COOP WORK

#### **Welcome and what is a Worker-owned Cooperative?**

*Description:*

This session is usually the first one in the 12-week coop training. The purpose of this session is to introduce different types of cooperatives and to start delving deeper into what worker cooperatives are. It is very important that participants are clear about your role as their incubator and set clear expectations of what they are committing to: developing a business from the ground up.

*Participants will...*

- learn about your organization’s commitment to cooperative development and some of the history behind it
- get an overview of the training program, its expectations and a timeline of the work ahead
- get to know each other through various activities. They will create a group contract/agreement
- get an understanding of the different types of cooperatives
- learn about worker cooperatives, their importance (regional, national, international), their main characteristics and contrast them to regular job structures
- if there is time, participants can watch a short movie to get a better sense of worker cooperatives in the world (Shift Change, Beyond the Bottom Line, or other clips)

#### **Principles, Values, Advantages and Disadvantages of Worker Cooperatives**

*Description:*

This session provides an opportunity to learn more about worker cooperatives through the lens of the principles and values they incorporate. Members continue to get to know each other and begin thinking about their own worker cooperative business.

*Participants will...*

- learn about the principles and values of cooperatives and how they may apply to their own lives
- identify what are some of the advantages and disadvantages of worker cooperatives
- start thinking about their own values and principles for their cooperative business
- continue to get to know each other through activities that make them connect with one another

## GROUP WORK

### Effective Communication and Team Building

*Description:*

This session has two main goals: 1) to understand the importance of having effective and clear communication skills which participants will build on as the sessions progress; and 2) to focus on group dynamics, so members continue to build trust among each other.

*Participants will...*

- learn and practice effective communication strategies such as (but not limited to), active listening and I-statements, both individually and as a group.
- engage in various team building activities. Examples of activities include but are not limited to the egg drop activity, toxic waste, the cobra game, etc. See resource sheet for other ideas.
- reflect on activities in order to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of having effective communication in their lives and in the coop.

### Decision Making

*Description:*

This session is designed to introduce different decision making processes, and to explore and engage with consensus as a potential process for the cooperative to adopt.

*Participants will...*

- discuss their experiences with the following types of decision making processes: spontaneous decision-making, one person decides, compromise, multi-voting, majority vote and consensus
- explore the pros of cons of these types of decision making processes
- learn what consensus is, understand its process and practice making a decision together by reaching consensus
- discuss why it is important to incorporate everyone's voice as they make decisions

### Anti-Oppression

*Description:*

This session is designed to facilitate members' creation of anti-oppressive workplaces by analyzing individual identities and experiences with oppression, situating these experiences within larger structural forces, and committing to challenge these systems within their cooperative. Due to the number of objectives and depth of these issues, it is recommended that multiple sessions be dedicated to this topic. Additionally, depending on developers' experience facilitating such conversations, it is recommended that outside presenters assist in delivering this training.

*Participants will...*

- learn what anti-oppression means and why it's important to cooperatives
- explore their identities to analyze power, privilege and forms of oppression that they experience, and to identify commonalities and differences within the group

- begin analyzing systems of oppression including root causes and who benefits
- engage in activities to cultivate an anti-oppressive, anti-exploitative and empowering workplace and society

<b>INDUSTRY</b>
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### **Learning about the Industry**

*Description:*

The content of this session depends on the type of business the cooperative is. It is not uncommon to invite a guest speaker for this session. Ideally you should bring an industry expert: a business owner or a consultant who has experience with the start-up phase of a business. The expert should be able to answer all industry-related questions from the cooperative members and the cooperative developers.

*Participants will...*

- learn about the industry their cooperative will be in.
  - For example: what does the market look like for this industry? What is the competition like? What distinguishes successful businesses? What characterizes potential clients? Where should cooperative find its clients? What are some of the licensing requirements? What type of relationship should the coop establish with suppliers? What are the recommendations regarding health and liability insurance and workers compensation?
- understand what the main challenges are of starting a business in this type of industry
- get a sense of what the day-to-day is like as a worker owner in this type of industry

### **Hard Skills**

*Description:*

The purpose of this session is to provide an overview and training of industry-specific skills for cooperative members. As with the industry session above, this session is most often facilitated by a guest speaker who has experience training people in the skills necessary for the cooperative's industry.

*Participants will...*

- learn about the skills necessary to provide quality service in their chosen industry, including best practices and recommended protocols
- receive initial practical training and determine next steps for further training

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

### Business Model Canvas

*Description:*

In this session we introduce the Business Model Canvas (BMC) and begin developing a business plan with coop members. The business plan will not be complete by the end of the session, but the purpose is to begin having this discussion and understanding

*Participants will...*

- learn what a business plan is, it's importance and what its components are
- begin filling out their cooperative's business plan
- have a basic understanding of the different types of costs associated with their business

*Prep work:*

- Participants should do some secret shopping prior to this workshop. They should call/research other businesses in their industry and get information on: services offered, prices, customer service experience, licenses/insurance provided, etc.
- Cooperative developers can/should develop a handout to give to participants.

### Business Financials

*Description:*

During this session participants begin brainstorming the different costs the cooperative will have. The purpose is to develop an idea about the different components and costs of a business, and to develop a tentative projection for breaking even, not to complete the financial plan by the end of the session.

*Participants will...*

- learn the difference between variable, fixed and investment costs
- identify variable, fixed and investment costs for their specific business
- develop a tentative projection for how many jobs the cooperative needs to break even, how many jobs the cooperative needs for all members to have full employment, and more

*Prep work:*

- Participants can do some investigation and consideration regarding their ideal wages, costs associated with start-up (investment), regular monthly costs (fixed), and costs that depend on the amount of work they have (variable). They can do this research by talking to others, looking at other companies, and pricing specific items.

### Management and Governance

*Description:*

The purpose of this session is to begin identifying the *management* and *governance* needs in a cooperative. We introduce cooperative members to their three distinct roles as *owners* and *policy-setters* of a business (*governance*), *managers* of a business (carrying out the policy), and *workers* in a business (engaging in the core operations). In this session we provide examples of management

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and committee structures within cooperatives (e.g. task delegation components of a business that help it run smoothly), and governance structures within cooperatives. This session can be split into two, and/or a more in-depth session on governance in cooperatives can take place after the initial 12-week training.

*Participants will...*

- distinguish between governance structure (e.g. democratic and participatory decision-making to set significant policy and strategic direction) and management needs of a business (e.g. committees to suggest and carry out policy)
- understand that decision making can look differently in their governance structure and management needs
- identify key roles, responsibilities and tasks required to operate their business successfully

### **Customer Service/Back Office**

*Description:*

There are two purposes in this session: the first is to prepare coop members to do customer service. The second is to introduce coop members to what a good back office system would look like and what it would entail. This session can/should be facilitated by an outside expert on back office services.

*Participants will...*

- learn about back office systems and why they are vital to their business
- begin outlining the characteristics of their back office system: intake calls' scripts and formats, job roster, etc.
- prepare themselves for their first customer consultations so they can make the client feel comfortable and confident about their services

### **Name and Brand Development**

*Description:*

This session is usually done by an outside consultant, someone who is an expert on marketing and brand development. This can be done in one or two sessions, depending on the type of business and the consultant's needs. The main goal is to understand what branding means, identify the target customer for the cooperative's services, and start identifying their branding strategies.

*Participants will...*

- learn about the purpose and execution of branding by analyzing examples
- begin identifying their brand by continuing to identify their services, values, target customer and competitive edge
- learn about the importance of selecting a name and will begin brainstorming options for their business name

## OTHER TOPICS AND POST-TRAINING

### Other topics we have covered in the initial training include:

- Political Education: Why develop cooperatives? What kind of world do we want to create? What is our current socioeconomic system?
- Worker's Rights: How to avoid exploitation and get the pay + respect you deserve
- Contracts: What is in a good contract? How do we use them?
- Living Wages: Discussion of Price Structure
- Publicity & market strategy planning
- Work Assignment List
- Work/Life/Leisure Balance and Self-Care Strategies
- Other hard skills trainings for specific job needs

### The following workshops are recommended for after the 12-week training:

- Incorporation
- Bylaws
- Sales
- Developing contracts
- Back office follow up sessions
- Political education and movement building
- Financial management (including personal finances)