10 YEARS OF COOPERATION
2011-2020 Review
This report provides the highlights of a decade of cooperation and service to cooperatives in Wisconsin and beyond. We enthusiastically strive to provide leadership in cooperative development, critical examination of the cooperative model, and education about how people can use the cooperative business model to build more inclusive local economies. All of this success reflects our network of dedicated and passionate cooperators collaborating together to communicate, engage, and demonstrate the cooperative difference in communities.

About
The University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives (UWCC) is a trusted and unbiased voice on the cooperative business model serving the needs of cooperatives in Wisconsin and beyond. With a strong public service orientation and access to world-class university resources, we leverage research, education, and outreach capabilities to foster critical thinking and understanding about cooperatives. As the only U.S. university-based center that studies and supports all forms of cooperative business, UWCC provides valued education and research to a diverse range of communities.

Mission
The University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives seeks to increase understanding and encourage critical thinking about cooperatives by fostering scholarship and mutual learning among academics, the cooperative community, policymakers, and the public.

Contact
427 Lorch Street, Madison, WI 53706
uwcc.wisc.edu | info@uwcc.wisc.edu
608-890-1048
Every fall, UWCC offers a comprehensive class on cooperatives. The course, *Cooperatives and Alternative Forms of Enterprise Ownership*, explores why cooperatives and other user-owned enterprises emerge, who they serve, how they differ from other forms of enterprise, and the ways in which they can be used to address social, economic, and environmental challenges. Since 2010, 250 students have completed UWCC’s Co-ops class.

While there is not a formal program on cooperatives at UW-Madison, UWCC has supported graduate and postdoctoral fellows with an interest in cooperatives with academic guidance, mentorship, access to cooperative documents and data, and industry connections to facilitate graduate research. Additionally, UWCC staff have supported students from the UW Law School who are interested in the cooperative model, and have worked directly with the Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic to support cooperative clients and develop cooperative legal resources.

### Scholarships

The **Farmer Cooperatives Young Leaders Scholarship Program** provides Farmer Cooperatives Conference scholarships to students with an interest in agribusiness and cooperatives. Since 2018, 36 scholarship recipients have attended the conference to learn about and interact with leaders from agricultural cooperatives. The program is made possible through the generous support of the Renk Agribusiness Institute, the Ralph K. Morris Foundation, and the William and Harold Moy Young Leaders Scholarship Fund.

The **Barbara and Thomas Lyon Scholarship Fund** was established in 2013 to support graduate students with an expressed interest in cooperatives. The award provides $4,000 annually to fund study and research materials, travel or other expenses.

"After attending the Farmer’s Cooperatives Conference, I feel more excited about working for a cooperative than any private company. The unique sense of ownership and pride in your work that the cooperative system provides seems to excite me."

–Samuel Jesse, 2019 Recipient
Latinx Cooperative Research

In 2019, UWCC generated the first national compilation of U.S. Latinx cooperatives of all co-op types and sectors. The initiative increased understanding of the collective role of Latinx cooperatives in the broader co-op community and provided opportunities for Latinx cooperators to connect. In collaboration with Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhard, UWCC summarized findings in the Latinx Co-op Power report.
Educating on the Cooperative Business Model

UWCC engages with individuals and organizations to educate about cooperatives and their potential roles in community and economic development.

**Directory of Cooperatives in Wisconsin** - UWCC has long maintained a directory of cooperatives in Wisconsin. In 2019, UWCC released an updated directory that includes interactive maps of the state's cooperatives offering users the ability to explore cooperatives by country, sector, and type.

**Employee Ownership as a Business Retention Strategy** - UWCC has actively promoted the role of cooperatives in growing and retaining local businesses. Since 2012, UWCC has organized three seminars, one webinar, and a roadshow on employee ownership transitions; presented at numerous state and national conferences; and engaged in conversations with dozens of businesses and economic development professionals.

**Convening Regional Cooperators** - UWCC is recognized as a leader in convening groups to advance the cooperative model. In 2019, UWCC co-hosted one of a series of regional policy roundtables bringing together a diverse set of cooperatives, community based organizations, and policy makers. Since 2013, UWCC has convened a cooperative developers roundtable to share resources, lessons learned, and ensure synergy between development efforts in the region.

**Strategic Outreach Partnerships** - UWCC has developed partnerships with many organizations at the local, state, and national levels. Examples of this work includes:
- **Madison Public Library**: Delivered free Cooperatives 101 presentations and helped develop the cooperative business model book collection.
- **Intertribal Agriculture Council**: Provided cooperative resources and trainings at regional tribal food sovereignty summits.
- **Co-op Connection**: Since 2011, UWCC has participated in Summit Credit Union's annual event that promotes and connects co-ops in Dane County.
Developing Cooperative Business

UWCC provides assistance to new and emerging cooperatives or businesses interested in converting to employee ownership.

Rural Cooperative Development
In 2011, UWCC initiated a decade of concerted work in cooperative business development through USDA’s annual Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) program. The RCDG program exists to help rural cooperatives and small businesses expand, create jobs, and strengthen their capacity to serve rural citizens and communities. UWCC provides cooperative development services to rural clients including assistance with organizational development, cooperative education, board training, strategic planning, and support during feasibility and business planning activities. Key project areas include food and agriculture: healthcare and childcare; broadband; renewable energy; affordable housing; and the promotion of employee ownership.

Madison Worker Cooperative Development
The Madison Cooperative Development Coalition (MCDC) is the City of Madison’s initiative to form worker cooperatives that address income inequality and racial disparities by creating living-wage and sustainable jobs. A collaborative of community-based organizations, business resource specialists, and cooperative developers, MCDC works to support the growth and creation of worker cooperatives, specifically addressing the factors affecting local communities of color, low-wealth, and traditionally excluded workforces. The goal is to create a sustainable system that will combat poverty, empower workers and increase equity in order to strengthen Madison’s long-term economic health.

Support of Grocery Cooperatives
Since 2015, UWCC has participated in the Small and Strong Initiative, which provides support and training to small, rural grocery cooperatives in the Upper Midwest. The program has included an annual one day conference and store peer audits. In partnership with Food Co-op Initiative, UWCC hosted peer learning calls to deliver training to start-up grocery cooperatives.

Training Cooperative Developers
UWCC is a member of a national network of cooperative development centers called CooperationWorks! through which we have provided training for cooperative development professionals based on our resources and research findings.
Cooperative Development Success Stories

UWCC is proud to provide support and technical assistance to cooperatives. Here are some examples of cooperative start-ups and conversions.

**Northwind Solar**
Northwind Solar is a solar power system design and installation company organized in 2007 in Amherst, WI. In 2016, UWCC provided technical assistance to the company to transition to a worker-owned cooperative. Throughout the 9 month conversion, UWCC provided governance and organizational development support.

**South Central Wisconsin Hemp Cooperative**
Founded in 2019, South Central Wisconsin Hemp Cooperative is a producer co-op focused on growing and marketing high quality certified organic hemp. UWCC has provided SCWHC with a wide range of technical assistance including cooperative governance training, organizational and bylaw development, and early-stage operations development. The first contemporary hemp co-op in Wisconsin, SCWHC is actively selling its first batch of USDA certified organic CBD oil while preparing a sales plan for their 2020 crop.

**Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative**
After the publication of the 2011 Southern WI Food Hub Feasibility Study by Dane County, UWCC became a key partner, along with Extension and the Wisconsin Farmers Union, in convening farmers to address their needs through opportunities identified in the study. Ongoing technical assistance led to the formation of the Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative, which has grown to over 40 farmer owners and over $2.5 million in annual sales.

**Oshkosh Food Co-op**
Incorporated in 2013, Oshkosh Food Co-op is set to open its doors in 2021. UWCC provided governance training and guidance to the co-op. Co-op founders participated in peer to peer learning calls for start up grocery cooperatives which were coordinated by UWCC and Food Co-op Initiative.

**Roots4Change Cooperative**
Dane County’s first immigrant-owned cooperative, Roots4Change is comprised of six social enterprises led by Latina and Indigenous doulas and community health workers. UWCC provided technical assistance including governance and financial training to worker-owners. The Madison Cooperative Development Coalition provided grand funding.
Education and Training for Cooperatives

UWCC provides education and professional development programs for current cooperative leaders.

**Farmer Cooperatives Conference (FCC)**
Developed in 1998 to address a gap in education opportunities for farmer cooperative leaders, FCC highlights the latest thinking on agricultural cooperative issues and trends. Since 2010, 1,710 farmer cooperative leaders have attended the event to exchange ideas with researchers, experts, and their cooperative peers.

**Consumer Cooperative Management Association Conference (CCMA)**
CCMA is the annual national conference for grocery cooperative leaders. While CCMA has served the grocery cooperative community for 65 years, UWCC assumed stewardship of the conference in 2017. Since 2010, over 5,000 people have attended CCMA to learn about industry innovation and best practices.

**Cooperative Director Training**
Since 2015, UWCC has delivered semiannual board director training for all sectors and types of cooperatives. These events bring together directors to learn about board best practices that support cooperatives’ success. The program highlights legal, finance, and governance topics bridge all cooperative sectors. Since 2015, 662 cooperators have attended the co-op directors trainings.

**International Cooperative Visits**
UWCC regularly hosts international cooperative delegations due to the robust cooperative community found in Wisconsin. UWCC develops tailored education programs on U.S. cooperatives and arranges visits with local cooperatives and farms for visitors. These programs offer an opportunity for exchange of ideas between different cooperative movements.