

UW Center for Cooperatives

2024 Impact Report

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.

Education, Training & Resources for Co-ops

UWCC develops regional workshops, national conferences, and tailored education for cooperative leaders.



At CCMA 2024, co-op leaders from National Co-op Grocers, Gem City Market, The Merc, Syracuse Co-op, and Erie Food Co-op shared stories of organizing in low-income, low-access neighborhoods.

2024 Education Highlights

872

co-op leaders participated in UWCC educational programs

124+

cooperatives participated in UWCC educational programs

24

co-op employees attended our new co-op employee training course

126

co-op board members attended UWCC director training

Expanding Access: Spanish Language Co-op Guide

With support from the Cooperative Development Foundation, UWCC produced *Cómo Desarrollar Cooperativas: Una Guía Práctica*, a 16-page Spanish guide on co-op structures, benefits, and startup strategies—meeting growing demand for Spanish resources in Wisconsin. Access the guide at go.wisc.edu/coopguia



Developing New Cooperative Businesses

UWCC supports new cooperatives and businesses exploring converting to cooperative ownership through technical assistance, startup planning, and guidance on feasibility and governance.



UWCC launched a video highlighting the transformative journey of a local veterinary business that successfully converted to worker ownership with UWCC support in 2023. Watch at go.wisc.edu/uwccvideo



UWCC helps co-ops secure WEDC Cooperative Development Grants. In 2024, seven awards totaling \$214,000 were made, with UWCC providing technical assistance to five recipients.

2024 Co-op Development Highlights

6

new cooperatives launched, including a bookstore and a carshare

32

active groups or cooperatives received technical assistance

100

percent of UWCC clients report high satisfaction on UWCC's annual client survey



Worker-owners of Los Volcanes each holding a portion of the ribbon from their cooperative launch.

The UWCC team was very helpful in guiding us in all of the decision making processes that we needed to make this year. Their understanding and guidance on the cooperative model was extremely valuable.

-Technical Assistance recipient



Snow River member-owners celebrate their 5th anniversary.

Post-Conversion Support Strengthens Co-ops

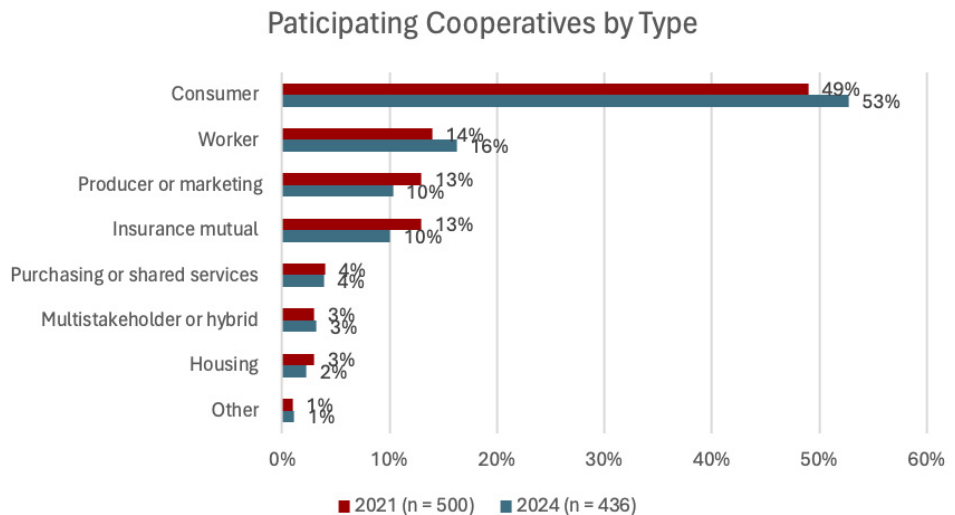
In 2019, nine employees in rural northern Wisconsin faced losing their jobs due to the closure a wholesale custom wood cutting business. With guidance from UWCC and Cooperative Development Services (CDS), they chose a bold path—converting to a worker owned cooperative. Five years later, Snow River Cooperative has weathered challenges, achieved above-average wages and benefits, and remained a vital business in Forest County. UWCC and CDS's post-conversion support has been an important component of the co-op's success. In 2024, our team attended Snow River board meetings, helped the co-op navigate a leadership change, and secured a grant to pay for a new marketing strategy.

Researching the Cooperative Model

UWCC's research reflects the Wisconsin Idea—it is driven by real-world cooperative experiences and informs our education, outreach, and development programming. Current projects explore governance, member engagement, and their impacts on social and economic performance.

Research Highlight: Cooperative Governance Research Initiative

UWCC's Cooperative Governance Research Initiative is a national, cross-sectoral study on cooperative governance practices. Its purpose is to generate robust data that empowers cooperatives across sectors to reflect upon and improve their governance structures, processes, and culture. In 2024, UWCC launched the second wave of data collection. The 2024 CGRI survey was completed by 436 cooperatives, credit unions, and mutuals, 225 of which also completed the 2021 survey.



This year, the research team also released two CGRI publications: *2021 Cooperative Governance Research Initiative Worker Co-op Findings* and *CGRI Research Brief: The Role of Right Mix and Board Development Practices in Governance Outcomes*, and drafted a manuscript exploring the impacts of co-op governance practices on social and economic outcomes.

Thank you for the Cooperative Governance Research Initiative report; I have kept a printed copy on my desk for quick reference since its publication. We have re-worked several aspects of our governance and at each step, the background and benchmarking data available through CGRI has been invaluable.

- Sheilah Stewart, SVP & General Counsel, Land O'Lakes

CGRI is the best data I know for unbiased, accurate information about how co-ops are doing the important and unique work of co-op governance. I use it to inform my work with directors and employees, students of cooperatives, the public, and other audiences.

- Hannah Scott, JD, Program Director, CFAES Center for Cooperatives, Ohio State University



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