

# The DC Cooperative Stakeholders Group



## Our mission

We aim to create a nurturing co-op eco-system in the District that supports the vitality and growth of all types of *existing* co-ops and the successful launch of *new* co-ops. We prioritize co-op opportunities within communities who traditionally have been economically and politically marginalized. We seek to weave a strong web of supportive relationships amongst all stakeholders, including every type of cooperative, supporting institutions and the city government. We aspire to create the first co-op business development center focused specifically on opportunities within the District of Columbia.

Visit [coopdevcenter.org](http://coopdevcenter.org)

## Who we are

We are a volunteer group of citizens, community leaders, business people, non-profits, and local government officials who have decided to come together in response to an invitation by the Office of Innovation & Equitable Development, a part of the DC government's Department of Small & Local Business Development. *Any person, business, or organization is welcome to participate in our activities.*

## Cooperatives are...

Cooperatives much more common than you probably think. Well-known businesses such as the Associated Press, Ace and True Value Hardware, OceanSpray, and credit unions are all cooperative businesses. Technically, **a cooperative is a jointly owned enterprise engaging in the production or distribution of goods or the supplying of services, operated by its members for their mutual benefit.** One attractive feature of co-ops is their versatility. It may be a business owned by its customers, as is the case with credit unions and food co-ops. Or it may be a housing complex owned by the residents. It may be a group of small independent businesses who pool their purchasing power and market under a shared brand. Employees can also band together to own and run their own businesses.

While co-op enterprises can be either non-profit or for-profit, their mission is never to simply *maximize* profits, and in that way they are some of the oldest of "socially responsible businesses". Whatever their type, they are more Main Street than Wall Street. They exist to serve their members, be they workers, residents, depositors, consumers or independent small businesses, or even some combination of those.

Furthermore, co-ops are shaped by the **seven international co-op principles**:

- Voluntary And Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Member Economic Participation
- Autonomy And Independence
- Education, Training, And Information
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern For Community

## The benefits of cooperatives

Cooperatives can combine some of the best elements of business efficiency, democratic practices, collaboration and a community-orientation. As business entities in a competitive market they need to be efficient and provide good value to their members. Their open, transparent governance structure complements their democratic ownership model. Most co-ops are owned by those living around them, making them committed to their community's prosperity and welfare.

## Co-ops in DC

### Housing co-ops (sometimes aka *low-equity co-ops*)

DC has the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest number of housing co-ops in the nation, with over 5,000 residents living in approximately 120 cooperatively owned buildings.

### Credit unions & other consumer-owned co-op businesses

DC is home to approximately 75 credit unions with an estimated 150,000 customer-members. Other examples of consumer-owned co-ops include the TPSS food co-op in Takoma Park, the Senbeb co-op, and the outdoor retailer REI.

### Worker-owned co-ops

DC has at least four worker-owned co-ops: the Tightsift Laboring Cooperative (DC's only employee-owned business founded by returning citizens), Little Weaver Web, Zenful Bites, and the Brighter Days Dogwalking Collective .

### Purchasing/marketing cooperatives

Local examples include hardware stores operating under the Ace or True Value brands, in particular *A Few Cool Hardware Stores*, with nine locations in and near the city.

### Child care co-ops

There are currently at approximately 10 child care cooperatives operating within the city, owned and managed by the participating families. Together they help to care for more than 150 children.

### National cooperative organizations

The city is home to at least six national cooperative associations, including: the National Cooperative Business Association, the National Cooperative Bank (aka NCB), the Credit Union National Association, the National Association of Housing Cooperatives, and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives.

## Fast Facts about cooperatives in the USA

- There are over 21,000 cooperatives nationwide with more than 127 million members
- They employ more than 500,000 Americans, with a combined payroll over \$15 billion.
- Together cooperatives have combined sales over \$230 billion.
- Nationwide there are 6,000+ credit unions. Collectively they manage \$1.2 trillion in assets.

## How to Join the Cooperative Stakeholders Group

Anyone interested in welcome to attend our monthly meetings. They are typically held at 1 PM on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of each month. The locations vary but often are at the offices of the DSLBD. To be added to the e-mail list serve please contact Kate Mereand-Sinha at [Katherine.Mereand-Sinha@dc.gov](mailto:Katherine.Mereand-Sinha@dc.gov)

## Where to learn more...

...about The Cooperative Stakeholders Group      [coopdevcenter.org](http://coopdevcenter.org)

...about the cooperative approach to business and housing please visit:

<a href="http://nba.coop">nba.coop</a>	re all co-ops
<a href="http://www.USWorker.coop">www.USWorker.coop</a>	re worker-owned co-ops
<a href="http://www.CUNA.org">www.CUNA.org</a>	re credit unions
<a href="http://coophousing.org">coophousing.org</a>	re housing co-ops nationwide
<a href="http://www.potomacassoc.org">www.potomacassoc.org</a>	The Potomac Association of Housing Cooperatives
<a href="http://coopscdc.org">coopscdc.org</a>	the DC Cooperative Housing Coalition