



COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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Cooperative Development Institute Client Satisfaction 2009 and Outcome Measurement 2005-2009

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BUILDING COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP AND ENTERPRISE IN THE NORTHEAST

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Introduction

After participating with *CooperationWorks!* and National Cooperative Business Association in discussions regarding how to go beyond traditional economic measurement to assess the value of our work to cooperatives and the value of cooperatives to their members and their communities, we developed and conducted an expanded, in-depth outcome measurement survey of clients who received Intensive Technical Assistance from CDI over a five-year period. Given the voluntary nature of survey participation, the response yields a slightly different set of clients every year. Despite these data problems, the resulting findings provide us with important insight regarding cooperative development outcomes and needs, and provide CDI with a deeper understanding of the value of our services as well as recommendations for future programming. In addition to the data collected through this survey, CDI's client database holds additional information such as the year technical assistance was initiated and year that the cooperative began. This historical data allows CDI to assess its effectiveness in reaching its outcome measurement goals as defined in the Stated Goals section below.

This year we introduced some new elements in our survey, including questions more tailored to housing co-ops, an assessment of likelihood to recommend CDI (widely considered a good rough measure of satisfaction¹), questions regarding the resources needed and used in cooperative development, and a request for advice to CDI.

Response

In May and June of 2010, the Cooperative Development Institute surveyed current and former clients to collect information about the effectiveness of CDI's services and the satisfaction clients had had with these services. Seventy-one surveys were distributed, of which 60 were returned, an 85% response rate. (Note: some organizations received more than one survey. See below for organizational response rates.)

Surveys were mailed to four different groups:

- Survey 1, the "Co-op Start-up Survey," went to groups that received CDI Intensive Technical Assistance (ITA) services in 2009-2010 but have not yet launched their business. Twenty-five groups fell in this category; 19 returned surveys.
- Survey 2, the "Co-op Survey," went to clients who received CDI ITA services in 2009-10 and who have launched or expanded a cooperative enterprise. Nine groups fell in this category; eight returned surveys.
- Survey 3, the "Co-op Census," went to clients who received CDI ITA services between 2005 and 2009 and who have launched or expanded a cooperative enterprise. Sixteen groups fell in this category, and 13 returned surveys.
- Survey 4, the "Collaborator Survey," went to twenty organizations with whom we worked on a collaborative project in 2009-2010; 19 of these partners returned surveys.

Respondents from existing cooperatives (surveys 2 and 3) reported serving an aggregate of over 9,900 members, and had over 190 employees², 20 of which were added in the last year.

¹ Though the measure has its critics. See for example <http://blog.vovici.com/blog/bid/18204/Net-Promoter-Score-NPS-Criticisms-and-Best-Practices>

² We counted full and part-time employees equivalently, but did not count seasonal, planned employment, or volunteers. When a range was given we took an average and rounded down.

These businesses reported 2009 revenues of \$19,034,000. The respondents whose businesses have not yet launched (survey 1) expect to serve an estimated additional 2,575 members and hire about 83 employees.

Thirty-eight percent of the emerging and existing cooperatives were in the agriculture or fishing sector; 35% were consumer food co-ops or food production/distribution co-ops; 20% were housing co-ops; 13% were service co-ops; 3% in retail and 3% in publishing/education³. Twenty-five percent of the respondents were owned (or to be owned) by producers, 20% by consumers, 18% by workers, 15% by residents, and 3% by businesses and organizations. The remaining 21% were hybrid, with combinations of stakeholders.

Rural Cooperative Development Goals & Outcomes

As part of our USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant performance measures for the last eleven years, CDI has assessed whether and to what extent it achieves the following two goals. The data determining these outcomes is collected through the 5-year client survey as well as CDI's client database.

Goal #1: 50% of the start-up cooperative projects who have received intensive technical assistance from CDI over the past five years will move into business within three years of planning, fundraising and organizing.

Outcome #1: Since 2005, 13 out of 15, or 87%, of the cooperatives that CDI supported as start-up ventures and that decided to proceed with their business have become operational within three years of receiving technical assistance, surpassing our goal of 50%. (One of the non-operational projects did launch within three years, but then folded. Another two projects decided not to proceed with their business and are not included in the calculation.) Thirteen projects that have not yet opened for business are still within their first three years of planning, fundraising, and organizing.

Goal #2: Within four years of becoming operational, 40% of start-up projects launched will: a.) move into profitable operations, b.) sustain a strong membership base and c.) bring significant economic value to their members as defined in their business plan.

Outcome #2: Of the twenty-three cooperatives that CDI supported since 2001 during their start-up and that have launched their businesses, we have data on ten. Of these, four achieved profitability within four years of launch, meeting our goal of 40%. One of the remainder achieved profitability 8 years after launch and six years after the start of support from CDI, one went out of business, and three have been in operation for less than 4 years.

Continuing the Development Process?

Of the surveys received from groups we have helped that have not launched, 95% said they were planning on continuing the development process, and the remainder did not know.

³ The percentages add to more than 100% because some co-ops identified with more than one sector.

Value to Members

When asked to select from a list of responses to the question “What is the benefit of your cooperative to your members?” existing cooperatives noted ‘sense of community’ (81%) followed by ‘ownership’ (71%) and ‘shared values’ (67%), and then by ‘sense of control’ (62%), ‘democratic participation’ (57%) and ‘better quality products & services’ (52%). Not far behind were ‘competitive prices’ and ‘responsive customer service’ at 48%, and ‘access to trustworthy information’ and ‘alternative or more product choice’ at 43%. Of medium interest were ‘market access’, ‘education/training opportunities’ and ‘opportunity for employment’ at 38%. The least noted values to members were ‘more affordable rent’ at 5% and ‘political access’ at 19%, and next least were ‘more affordable products & services’ (29%) and ‘access to services’ and ‘patronage refunds’ (33%).

Additional ‘other’ benefits included: farmer-to-farmer mentoring, a home of their own, supporting local food growers, developing and incubating and promoting by example and collaboration sustainable local agriculture and environmental stewardship and restoration, source of capital (loan fund), and professional services (certification).

For groups that have not yet launched their business, the most important benefits were perceived as ‘sense of community’ (95%) and ‘ownership’ (84%), followed by ‘democratic participation’ (79%) and ‘shared values’ and ‘sense of control’ (74%). Next most noted were and ‘education/training opportunities’ (63%), ‘access to trustworthy information’ (58%), and ‘access to services’ and ‘opportunity for employment’ (47%). These were closely followed by ‘better quality products & services’ and ‘more affordable products & services’ at 42%. Of medium estimated benefit to future members were ‘responsive customer service,’ ‘more affordable rent,’ and ‘alternative or more product choice’ at 37%. Next were ‘market access’ and ‘competitive prices’ at 32%. Like existing co-ops, it’s interesting to note that ‘political access’ was nearly the least important perceived benefit at 21%, followed only by ‘patronage refunds’ (16%). An additional ‘other’ benefit was noted: sustainable lifestyle.

The choices from existing and emerging co-ops for this year and the next were arranged in descending order of frequency of selection (see next page). From this table, we can see a fairly stable grouping near the top, consisting of ‘sense of community,’ ‘shared values,’ ‘sense of control,’ and ‘democratic participation,’ now joined by ‘ownership.’ Consistently among the least noted benefits are patronage refunds and political access. The other benefits show more variability in ranking from group to group and year to year.

Ranking⁴ of Benefits Perceived by existing and emerging co-ops, 2009 and 2008

Benefit	% of existing co-ops selected	% of emerging co-ops selected	Existing (2008)	Emerging (2008)
Sense of Community	81%	95%	62%	80%
Ownership	71%	84%	N/A	N/A
Shared Values	67%	74%	46%	80%
Sense of Control	62%	74%	54%	55%
Democratic Participation	57%	82%	62%	40%
Better Quality Products & Services	52%	42%	69%	60%
Education/Training Opportunities	38%	63%	54%	60%
Access to Trustworthy Information	43%	58%	38%	50%
Opportunity for Employment	38%	47%	54%	50%
Alternative or More Product Choice	43%	37%	38%	50%
Competitive Prices	48%	32%	38%	45%
Access to Services	33%	47%	23%	60%
Market Access	38%	32%	31%	60%
Responsive Customer Service	48%	37%	31%	40%
More Affordable Products & Services	29%	42%	23%	50%
Patronage Refunds	33%	16%	38%	10%
More Affordable Rent ⁵	5%	37%	N/A	N/A
Political Access	19%	21%	8%	20%

Community Benefits

When asked “What is the value of your organization to your home community?” eighty-six percent of those respondents who were in business selected ‘supports local businesses’ as the number one benefit. ‘Buys local’ ranked second highest at 81%. Next highest were ‘creates local jobs’ at 76% and ‘supports community events/programs’ at 71%, followed by ‘promotes community sustainability’ and ‘models socially responsible business practices’ at 62%. ‘Recycles/reduces waste’ came in at 57%, while ‘uses renewable resources’ ranked at 52%. Only 38% of respondents chose ‘provides community leadership’ as a community benefit of their co-op, and only 5% chose ‘provides affordable housing’.

⁴ The listing in this table has been arranged by an unweighted average ‘ranking’ over the two years and two classes of co-ops.

⁵ It should be noted that 100% of the emerging and existing respondents associated with housing marked ‘more affordable rent’ as a benefit to members.

Profitability and Business Planning

Of the respondents from existing cooperatives we assisted this year (survey 2), three of the 8 were profitable in 2009 (or their last fiscal year) and four did not know. In the group that we assisted between 2003 and 2008, six of thirteen were profitable and one did not know.

Thirty-eight per cent of those we assisted this year met or exceeded their business projections, and fifty percent did not know whether or not they did; fifty percent reported having a business plan and thirteen did not know. Sixty-nine per cent of those in the five-year group reported having met or exceeded their business projections and ten of the thirteen respondents had business plans.

Of the nineteen businesses that have not yet launched, 7 reported that they have a business plan.

Effects of Support Services from CDI

Based on a list of suggestions, existing co-ops were asked to report on what the assistance they received from CDI in the past year allowed them to do. The most frequent response was 'plan for the future' (50%) followed by 'get into business' and 'improve member satisfaction' (both 38%). One-quarter of respondents selected 'convert existing business to cooperative ownership', 'improve our operations', 'increase local control over essential products, services, jobs, or natural resources', 'improve board skills' and 'improve management skills'.

Quality of Support from CDI

Forty-one respondents rated the quality of services they received from CDI, with an overall average of 8.46, where 1 = unsatisfactory and 10 = excellent.

Likelihood of Recommending CDI

Forty-three respondents rated the likelihood that they would recommend working with CDI to another group, with an overall average of 9.19, where 1 = not at all likely and 10 = definitely. The proportion of people responding with a 9 or 10 to this question, who can be considered "promoters," was 77%. "Neutrals" or those responding with a 7 or 8 represented 19%. "Detractors," those that responded with 6 or less, were 5% of the total.

The comments for "Why or why not?" included the following:

- Don't know of any other comparable resource as CDI.
- Detailed expertise base.
- CDI is a local expert on co-ops
- Very fair and flexible, while giving sound advice.
- Because you had all the right array of answers for us, and I got really a clear image of what I needed to do in order for us to become totally a business
- helpful
- CDI has great resources and stellar people; you've been really helpful to us
- CDI was supportive and pointed us in the right direction. I consider CDI to be a valuable resource to other community- or grass-roots based organizations

- Responsive; skilled; enthusiastic problem solver/get-it-done attitude; good listener; understands business development, cooperative enterprise, cooperative decision-making
- Great staff and great to work with
- We could never have done this without them.
- I was in a special situation that I don't think would necessarily be repeated with other groups, as I already had a working and personal relationship with CDI. Thus, at times, CDI's support for me could be rather informal, which might not have been the best for other people. However, I recognize the special situation I was in, and the tremendous support I received, and thus I'm sure the support would be fantastic for someone in a more formal setting.
- CDI offers more services for retail cooperatives, so I would recommend CDI to business owners.
- Our situation was a very difficult one and I believe that the way CDI handled our situation from the beginning hurt the process. They could have done some more homework before they rode into town telling us that the park was for sale when it was not. Now it makes my work as President all that much more difficult trying to recruit and convince people that we should move forward with this.
- I want to be able to count on CDI as a partner

CDI Strengths

An open ended question asked about what respondents perceived to be CDI's strengths. Coding these comments into themes, we find that people perceive the following qualities in CDI:

- Knowledge/Business savvy/resources/guidance:
 - 15 comments (9 unlaunched, 4 existing clients, 2 collaborators)
- Organization/administration/facilitation/focus:
 - 11 comments (7 unlaunched, 2 existing clients, 2 collaborators)
- Sensitivity/engagement/commitment
 - 8 comments (5 unlaunched, 2 existing clients, 1 collaborator)
- Positive:
 - 7 comments (1 unlaunched, 6 collaborators)
- Negative/None/N/A:
 - 3 comments (3 collaborators)
- Grant/funding/financing help:
 - 4 comments (4 unlaunched)
- Appreciation of individuals/staff/consultants
 - 3 comments (1 unlaunched, 1 existing client, 1 collaborator)
- Educational/Training/Information Opportunities:
 - 2 comments (1 unlaunched, 1 collaborators)
- Networking:
 - 1 comment (1 unlaunched)
- Specific Project:
 - 1 comments (1 collaborator)

Below are the comments grouped by theme. Each comment is labeled with its source: (U) for unlaunched clients, (E) for existing cooperative clients, and (C) for collaborators.

Knowledge/business savvy/resources/guidance:

- knowledge and history in cooperatives (U)
- CDI really helped me check the reality of my business plan ideas. They talked through my theories, concepts, ideas, hopes, etc. and helped me take my theoretical co-op from some scattered concepts into a thoroughly fleshed-out and realistic plan. My discussions with CDI on the phone, as well as the support they delivered by writing notes on my business plan as I developed it, made all of the difference in the world... (U)
- Detailed expertise base regarding financial and legal structures and processes. (U)
- Knowledge... (U)
- knowledge and discussion of cooperative model (U)
- Expertise... (U)
- financing knowledge... (U)
- immense; if Andy wasn't there probably park would be sold by now to another buyer and headed for \$500/mo rent. When Andy facilitated organizing the group they learned more about their circumstances, dealing with the lawyer and current owner. (U)
- Knowledge... ..expertise (U)
- knowledge... (E)
- Knowledge of cooperatives and general guidance/direction. (E)
- An advisor with strong financial and landlord experience. (E)
- knowledge (E)
- Participating in monthly phone calls and providing lists of resources. (C)
- The CDI has been a wonderful technical resource... (C)

Organization/administration/facilitation/focus:

- professional support, logistical support, developmental support... (U)
- Clarity and purpose. (U)
- Support in the area of set-up, bylaws, finances (U)
- ...organization, critical thinking... (U)
- ...and information on cooperative organization rules (U)
- ...providing solid board structure... (U)
- Focus (U)
- structure of co-op development, development of co-op (E)
- organization (E)
- Setting up Maine Organic Milling with its bylaws was invaluable. (C)
- CDI worked with our Peer Technical Assistance Project and provided valuable help setting up an intake process. (C)

Sensitivity/engagement/commitment:

- ...enthusiasm (U)
- ...I don't think I would have gotten through the first attempt at writing a business plan if it weren't for CDI's thoughtfulness, creativity, and willingness to believe in my ideas. Really, I want to emphasize that: CDI made my business plan possible and a reality. I couldn't have done it without them. (U)
- [Jen Caruso] was pivotal in our process of beginning to believe that the transition from private to cooperative, community ownership was possible. (U)
- ...and availability and prompt response. (U)
- ...of showing us we can do it on our own and we're not alone; commitment to not let us fail (U)
- ...accessibility, support (E)
- support (E)
- ...CDI's been patient thru a few bumps in the road, but keeping the optimism. (C)

Positive:

- We are new to working with CDI and the little contact we've had thus far exceeds my expectations. I'm pleased with the response time and assistance we've gotten. We received assistance with the grant we just received for doing a feasibility study. (U)
- Enjoyed working with CDI. (C)
- CDI is a unique resource for the northeast. (C)
- It was a pleasure working with CDI again. (C)
- CDI does good work. I'm a demanding grader. (C)
- CDI joined the ROC USA Network in the fall of 2009 and has developed a strong pipeline of for-sale communities; has responded to multiple requests from existing resident-owned communities in MA, CT, and RI; has actively participated in the Network sharing tips, issues, creative problem solving, and resources. CDI has been the most active in market development of any of the Network members. (C)
- ...and great to work with (C)

Negative/None/N/A:

- I'm concerned about the lack of an experienced CDI educator / outreach person in southern New England that can cover multiple co-op topics in CT, MA, and RI. (C)
- have had applicants complain about inconsistency, high price, and lack of follow up. (C)
- I've found contracting with CDI (twice to date) to be somewhat difficult due to a lack of specific, measurable deliverables. (C)

Grant/funding/financing help:

- ...grant application support (U)
- access to funding... ...income stream to support cash flow (U)

- CDI has the financial strength that our team is going to need to get this done. (U)
- ...financing... (U)

Appreciation of individuals/staff/consultants:

- Jen Caruso's enthusiasm, experience and assistance was very valuable in our early stages... (U)
- Lynda's attention to detail and prompt responses to my questions. (E)
- Jane Livingston is a wonderful connection for the Fiesta... (C)

Educational/Training/Informational Opportunities

- We are just starting up. Initial education, such as a terrific overview of cooperatives was very valuable. (U)
- Lynda and others from CDI have brought an essential piece of the puzzle to the table for the fishermen and fishing communities. From Co-op 101 to other organizational expertise, the communities have thus far found the information highly useful. (C)

Networking:

- Connections to other cooperatives... (U)

Specific Project:

- VCLT worked with CDI to plan the Together on the Land Tour (C)

Improving CDI's support for cooperatives

Here are the comments in response to the question on how CDI can improve its services. Coding these comments into themes, we find that people perceive the following areas for improving CDI's services:

- More contact/check-ins/follow-up / greater staff capacity / greater on the ground presence / consistency:
 - 8 comments (5 unlaunched clients, 3 existing cooperative clients, 1 collaborator)
- Don't know/N/A:
 - 8 comments (6 unlaunched clients, 2 existing cooperative clients)
- Positive:
 - 5 comments (4 unlaunched clients, 1 existing cooperative client)
- More networking and learning opportunities:
 - 3 comments (3 unlaunched clients)
- More funding for groups:
 - 2 comments (2 unlaunched clients)
- Specific services/TA:
 - 1 comment (1 existing cooperative client)
- More and better marketing of CDI/outreach:
 - 1 comments (1 existing co-op)

- Negative:
 - 1 comment (1 unlaunched client)

Below are the comments grouped by theme. Each comment is labeled with its source: (U) for unlaunched clients and (E) for existing cooperative clients.

More contact/check-ins/follow-up / greater staff capacity / greater on-the-ground presence / consistency:

- more hands on... (U)
- While all of their support was incredibly helpful, as described above, I occasionally felt lost when meetings of ours would be canceled two weeks in a row, or we wouldn't talk in a long time as scheduled, and thus I felt the support was not always 100% there when I needed it. I do not mean that I don't think they wanted to help me all of the time, I just feel like occasionally things fell through which could have been followed up on or rescheduled at a quicker pace. And because sometime we did not talk for a long time, it took us a considerable amount of time to remember where we left off, or CDI was not always aware of the recent changes, and a lot of time was spent catching everyone up to speed - thus taking away from dialogue time and support. (U)
- I've had no complaints. The only improvement would be a generic more. (U)
- More consistent contact. When Jen took her leave of absence, then eventually left the organization, it would have been great to have contact and information from someone else in the organization. (U)
- Work more collaboratively (U)
- We needed more help/hours than we originally thought. CDI staff seem quite "stretched". (E)
- set up regular meetings (E)
- Perhaps by hiring more staff; since our advisor, without working on our project, is working 60+ hours and does not have time to offer us meaningful support. (E)

Don't know/N/A:

- n/a (U)
- None. (U)
- NA (U)
- I don't have an answer; haven't worked with you long enough to form one. (U)
- CDI was probably underutilized because [our group] already had structure, maximum services already provided by CDI (U)
- not sure yet (U)
- n/a (E)
- na (E)

Positive:

- CDI has done great so far with our group! (U)
- It does not need to improve. It has satisfied all our needs so far. (U)

- don't know, all done so far is top notch (U)
- continue as is (U)
- ?? keep doing what you are doing! (E)

More Networking and Learning Opportunities:

- do more of those cool co-op classes (U)
- provide more trainings... (U)
- Provide more on the website (U)

More funding for groups:

- ...help with writing grants and development (U)
- ...find grants, support fundraising (U)

Specific services/TA:

- develop list of legal people willing to work pro-bono. for poor start-ups like us (E)

More and better marketing of CDI/outreach:

- That survey is good as it is already showing support, then below I am learning about what I could be contacting you for, when I will have a second. (E)

Negative:

- ...CDI could have done a significantly better job in the beginning completing their homework, doing investigative work, discussing the opportunity with the current owner, etc. They really turned our community off to this project because of the way they handled it. (U)

We asked respondents from collaborative projects “What opportunities for collaborative work between our organizations do you foresee in the next year?” Coding their responses by theme, we found the following areas of interest:

- Specific Projects/Client Assistance: 7 comments
- Sector Assistance: 5 comments
- Education: workshops/trainings/seminars/events/programs/curricula/internships: 2 comments
- None/Don't Know: 1 comment
- Organizational: 1 comment
- Concern: 1 comment

Specific Projects / Client Assistance:

- I look forward to the Co-op CT project we all are working on together...
- we have borrowers and loan applicants that need TA. If we make a loan we would hope to be able to get the borrower to borrow extra to pay for TA.
- More resources and help with Co-op Month plans.

- We might well seek more such support [for developing cooperatives in Maine].
- We will be working together on the 319 project with CDI, UCONN, local nursery growers, EPA and CT DEP
- ...I also hope CDI can co-sponsor the Together on the Land Tour in 2011 if the sponsors decide to do it again.
- We hope to make this an annual event, highlighting co-ops in this region. I'm sure we will be working on the Co-op Cafe together every year.

Sector Assistance:

- Lots, more producer/consumer co-ops, forest landowner co-ops, equipment sharing co-ops.
- More of the same. Fishing communities will continue to need the sort of expertise CDI brings. We see ourselves as the conduit - when a community is at the point that they are ready for CDI's work, we make the connections with Lynda.
- This is an on-going relationship; CDI is an active member of the ... Network and is contractually obligated to provide services in the NE market. The value to our organization is that we have a highly skilled, motivated member organization serving our customers ... and dedicated to our mission ...
- More work together on the Peer TA Network, exchange of models, beginning to build a library of models, mapping out worker cooperative best practices.
- I hope we can continue to talk about how manufactured home park cooperatives and community land trusts might work together.

Education: workshops/trainings/seminars/events/programs/curricula/internships:

- Additional workshops and conferences.
- continued joint work to educate and inform

None/Don't Know:

- Our planning is pretty much set for calendar year 2010. We will be starting to think about 2011 in the fall. Of course, if something comes up, we'd be happy to take a look or reach out to CDI, whichever the case may be.

Organizational:

- We are currently exploring ways of clarifying our national organization's culture and building awareness of and support for that culture with our 500 employees. Do you get involved in that kind of work? If you work exclusively in the Northeast, [Co-op] may need your help in strengthening their fledgling cooperative that we helped develop.

Concern:

- ...but [I] still am concerned about lack of skilled/experienced people.

Interest in Specific CDI Services

Respondents were asked to check off which CDI services were most of interest. Unlaunched groups mentioned 'Fundraising/Financing' (74%) most frequently, followed by 'Preparation of By-Laws' (68%), and then followed by 'Co-op to Co-op Networking' (63%) and 'Business Planning', 'Preparation of Incorporation Documents' and 'Feasibility Study', (all at 58%), then by 'Strategic Planning' (53%). Next most of interest was 'Board or Management Training' (57%).

Of medium interest were 'Marketing Plan' and 'Accounting Services' (42%), 'Preparation of Lease and Marketing Agreements' and 'Set-up of Accounting Books' (37%), and 'Market Research' and 'Communications Training' (32%).

Of lower interest was 'Conflict Management' (26%), 'Market Development' and 'Meeting and Planning Facilitation' (21%).

Existing cooperative clients were most interested in business planning and fundraising/financing (48%), followed by strategic planning and co-op to co-op networking (38%), board or management training and preparation of by-laws (33%), and marketing plan (29%). Next came market research (24%), followed by meeting planning and facilitation, accounting services, set-up of accounting books, and communications training (19%) and preparation of incorporation documents and preparation of lease and marketing agreements (14%). Lowest-ranked was feasibility study, market development, and conflict management (all at 5%).

The unlaunched and launched clients had the chance to fill in "Other" on the above question. Coding the responses into themes, we see interest in the following additional areas:

- Finding Financing: 4 comments
- Specific Technical Assistance: 3 comments
- Membership Development: 2 comments
- Don't Know/No/N/A: 2 comments

Finding Financing:

- USDA Value Added Producer Grant
- ...and creative financing and access to federal assistance for cooperatives.
- Funding, fundraising, legal structures for financing
- grant writing

Specific Technical Assistance:

- Legal Consultation
- Internal governance training
- how to track results from events or marketing push; providing archives or references to archives (articles to download) on how to keep track of sales drives, outreach, advertising; marketing ideas; feasibility;

Membership Development:

- mentorship for members in developing cooperatives.

- Member training and development.

Don't Know/No/N/A:

- We may not use all of the above, but theoretically they are of interest. We have several attorneys on the Steering Committee, so we have access to some of the legal advisory needed.
- Don't know how you describe services provided so far

Issues Facing Cooperatives Today

Here are the responses to the open-ended question “What are the most significant issues affecting the success of your cooperative?”

Coding the responses by theme, respondents perceive the following issues as significantly affecting their cooperatives:

- Organizational Structure and Development: 13 comments
- Capital: 11 comments
- Specific: 7 comments
- Profitability/Viability: 6 comments
- Growth (size, sales, profits, membership): 5 comments
- External Economic Factors: 3 comments
- Public Awareness and Attitudes: 2 comments
- Don't Know/NA: 2 comments
- Technical Assistance and Support: 1 comment

Organizational Structure and Development:

- ...developing a culture of collaboration between members, keeping high expectations
- ...and willpower to start-up!
- Uniting the divergent interests of the cooperative members
- Getting it up and running.
- In the development stage, having the community volunteers follow through with the immense amount of work necessary to transition to a community-owned cooperative. We, the current owners, have very limited time and energy to devote to this massive effort. An incredibly talented and committed group of individuals have stepped forward to shepherd this process. It is taking a very large commitment on the part of several of the members and quite a lot of commitment from the other members, plus availability, willingness, and effort from many other community members. We didn't know if people would step forward and follow through, but so far the response is overwhelmingly positive. Once the transition occurs, I think the most significant challenge will be in the management arena. ... (the other owner) and I will continue on for a period of time. We anticipate some pretty significant challenges in transitioning from being owners to being employees. We don't know how compatible it will be for us to work within an organization that we are accustomed to running. So whether we

stay on as Management short term or medium term, at some point the Board will need to hire a new General Manager...

- continuity of engaged and trained board members
- The members of the community understanding that this truly is going to be a positive thing for them.
- communication between members, articulation of shared goals...
- ...updating by-laws, writing employee handbook
- A sense of ownership in our members, or rather a lack thereof, is the root of most problems affecting [our co-op]. We are in the process of hiring a management company and are hoping to re-work our organization's structure to better serve our members' needs.
- ...Building effective operational systems...
- leadership development...
- ...Our co-op has been slow to bring on new worker owners because of financial concerns about the company in past years and difficulties with codifying policy around worker ownership.

Funding/Financing/Capital:

- funding
- Bank financing.
- Getting the funds...
- Making enough profit to stay in business
- money
- obtaining as many grants as possible...
- Our lack of financial capital and resources. Need help setting up equity membership structure to raise capital funds. Lack of consulting/legal fee funds.
- CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
- ...financial support for management
- funds to seed crops to provide year round marketing
- Access to funding...

Specific:

- Processing facilities and infrastructure
- knowing how to proceed with marketing and product development.
- ...In a semi-rural setting, for a very financially constrained business, finding a talented and committed GM may be quite challenging. This is a rather complicated small business and it takes a unique set of talents to thrive in this setting.
- ...to bring infrastructure to code and get all structural work done
- purchase of the park, if we can get by this and purchase the park the residents in collaboration with CDI's help can make it successful
- finding correct products for the people we will be servicing
- the failed septic system and right now not so sure the owner of the park is going to sell

Profitability/Viability:

- Securing the on-going financial sustainability.
- competition, profit margin
- sales
- reaching profitability
- Shifting our operations from 'Emergency Business' to 'Emerging Business'. Whipping this shoe-string family business into a functioning entity of its own.
- Opening our cafe, developing profitability

Growth:

- adding good new members...
- recruitment of members, new officers (ie replace president)
- ...Continuing to build membership and customer base.
- Bringing new worker owners into the company...
- Managing Growth. Expanding product line

External Economic Factors:

- Skyrocketing costs in New England.
- Peak oil.
- Outside economic conditions...

Public Awareness and Attitudes:

- educating the public about what a co-op is.
- ...false publicity about farmstead products in the press or by others...

Don't Know

- ...we are just beginning so we don't even know what challenges will affect us
- n/a

Technical Assistance and Support:

- Access to planning

Resources for Cooperative Development

The cooperative projects and organizations that took the survey were asked to evaluate what resources had been helpful to them in their development experience. The results were as follows.

Local Resource	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Very Helpful
Local Volunteers	68%	23%	9%
Local Skills	73%	27%	0%
Local Money	62%	29%	10%
Local Experience	70%	22%	9%
Local Cooperatives	50%	41%	9%
Local Organizations	61%	26%	13%

The most helpful local asset appears to be skills, while the least helpful appears to be local cooperatives. However, cooperatives were rated much more highly in usefulness by emerging organizations (those that have not yet launched or that received services in the past year) than those that have been in existence for longer. Respondents were asked to add any other local assets or resources that were helpful to them and comment on the helpfulness of local resources. Their responses are below.

- Professors in the five colleges, other specific individuals in the Pioneer Valley (Mary Hoyer, etc.)
- Cooperative Members' available resources
- we need more volunteers and local cooperatives and experience - what resources we have had, are helpful
- We are still in the early stages so have had limited need for funds.
- town has been helpful, senior center lets us meet for free
- honestly- we don't feel like we have any local support with this. The Evergreen Cooperative in Warren has been our best resource yet.
- We've mobilized lots of local support.

Other Resource	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Very Helpful
Co-op Document Templates	60%	40%	0%
Co-op News Stories/Articles	41%	53%	6%
Co-op List-servs	41%	41%	18%
Training	74%	21%	5%
Professional Advice	82%	18%	0%
Professional Services	78%	22%	0%
Grant Money	71%	14%	14%
Loan Money	67%	13%	20%

These results suggest that access to professional advice, professional services, and training are the most helpful resources for co-op development. It should be noted, again, that those resources that seem least helpful (co-op news stories/articles and co-op list-servs) are rated more highly by unlaunched start-up projects than by established businesses. In fact, the helpfulness of nearly all resources is rated higher by start-ups than by established co-ops.

Suggestions of additional resources and comments included:

- Any assistance is helpful.
- Consulting CDI for questions regarding legal and financial considerations of business transactions
- We are still in the early stages so have had limited needs for funding.

Next, respondents were asked to identify other helpful actors in their cooperative development, in the following categories. Open-ended responses included:

Peer Groups or Networks

- Erbin Crowell
- Cooperative Hub/Len Krimerman
- CGIN's listserv
- Valley Alliance of Worker Cooperatives (VAWC)
- WREN, Tillotson Fund Learning Community, Leadership North Country
- Mary Lou Krambeer is an incredible facilitator and group organizer
- Cooperative Hub, Cooperative Kitchen... both in Willimantic
- we should all work together more
- Evergreen Park - Warren, MA
- park slope food co-op, mariposa co-op
- CSI
- Portland Buy Local, Maine Business for Sustainability
- Other co-op general managers, CDI staff, CDS staff, NCGA staff
- Farmers Market Coalition
- VAWC

Local and Regional Organizations Other than CDI

- Access Agency Willimantic, CT
- NAMA
- Other Intentional Communities located in various states across the nation.
- Kamigo Marketing, SBDC, NOFA
- Equal Exchange, Cooperative Fund of New England
- Access Agency
- New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
- NOFA-CT, Farm Bureau of CT
- Androscoggin Valley Council of Government

- New England Dairy Promotion Board, VT Agency of Agriculture
- Franklin County CDC, Cooperative Housing Association of New England (CHANE), RDI.
- NOFA (Northeast Organic Farmers Association)
- Co-op Extension; Maine Poultry Growers
- Small Business Development Center, Portland Buy Local
- NCGA, CDS, NCBA
- NESAWG
- CFNE
- RI Rural Development, Agri Mark

National Organizations

- CDS, Food Co-op 500
- US Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USWFC)
- Federal Appropriations Application from Joe Courtney
- Farm to Consumer Defense Fund
- National Association of Housing Cooperatives (NAHC)
- Cooperative Institute?
- Small Business Administration, Wiscasset, Maine
- US Federation of Worker Cooperatives
- farmers market coalition
- USFWC

Government Organizations

- Small Business Development Center
- North Country resource and Development Area council
- Town of Johnson
- USDA
- Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development
- Local Housing Authority
- USDA Rural Development, USDA CREES, USDA FMPP
- CT Clean Energy Fund; MA Clean Energy Commission
- RI Div of Agriculture
- The Attorney General genial to Manufactured Housing Community Law

Our collaborating partners were asked their views on what support, resources or technical assistance they consider important to starting new co-ops and supporting existing co-ops. Their responses are below, coded by theme.

- Professional Services/Advice/Resources: 8 comments
- Training: 5 comments

- Organizational Development: 4 comments
- Funding/Financing: 4 comments
- Don't Know/NA: 3 comments
- Support/Infrastructure: 2 comments
- Networking/Outreach: 1 comment

Professional services/advice/resources

- business planning... ..quick easy answers
- A one-stop shopping place/clearinghouse for resources, how-to's, support, and advice.
- Technical support for co-op development, for understanding unique co-op principles, etc.
- ...organizational/business development consultation
- Cooperative statutes, model bylaws, resource people to answer questions.
- ...business planning, market analysis, business development, coaching, technical support...
- tech assistance in business planning, tech resource to call with questions
- Legal help...

Training

- seminars, workshops...
- Formal cooperative structural, legal and business training in place of just mentoring a leader. This may be available, but I have not experienced it.
- Knowledge - the Co-op 101 webinar was very helpful...
- Training...
- ...Training in communications...

Organizational development

- initial group formation, facilitation, accountability, communication...
- ...organizational development...
- ...establishing governance and operating conditions
- ...Organizing so that everyone starts on the same page. Ongoing training for new members.

Funding/financing

- ...funding for planning...
- Funding, capitalization...
- ...financial resources...
- ...financing for cooperative start-up and growth

Don't Know/NA

- Not sure, its not really my areas of expertise
- I don't have much insight into this.
- ?

Support/infrastructure

- ...inclusion of nonprofit “parent orgs” for many co-op start-ups
- ...and organizational infrastructure

Networking/Outreach

- ...networking with other cooperatives; promoting the cooperative business model...

Partnering organizations were then asked, of these, which are well represented in the Northeast and which are underrepresented. Opinions varied considerably on this question, with the most frequent response claiming lack of knowledge, and equal numbers of people feeling that resources were well represented and were underrepresented. The comments about outreach and awareness being needed about those resources that are present may be the most helpful to understand the current development landscape. Comments follow, coded by theme.

- Don't Know/NA: 5 comments
- Not well represented: 3 comments
- Well represented: 3 comments
- Sector-Specific: 2 comments
- Outreach/Awareness Needed: 2 comments
- Capital Needs: 1 comment

Don't Know/NA

- Not sure, its not really my areas of expertise
- Don't know
- Don't know because we're located in WI.
- I don't have much insight into this.
- ?

Not well represented

- none
- All are underrepresented
- All are underrepresented.

Well represented

- I think they are all available thru CDI.
- Most are pretty strong.
- all are represented in NE

Sector-specific

- depends on the industry, housing vs. worker -ownership
- Resources - particularly monetary - are missing for fishing related co-operatives because it's a relatively new piece.

Outreach/Awareness Needed

- All the pieces are available/here in Northeast; however there are gaps in connecting the people starting cooperatives in finding what they need...
- all are fairly well represented but access to/knowledge of support orgs is scattered

Capital needs

- ...Start-up capital can be particularly challenging.

Advice to CDI

All survey respondents were asked to offer advice to CDI as we plan for the next few years. Their responses are below, coded by theme. Of those who gave advice, the greatest emphasis was on increasing staff capacity and presence and raising public awareness about co-ops in general and CDI in particular.

- Don't Know/NA: 13 comments
- Appreciation: 10 comments
- Greater Presence: 8 comments
- Outreach/Public Education & Awareness: 5 comments
- Improve Delivery of Services: 5 comments
- Increase Funding: 4 comments
- Specific Services: 4 comments
- Networking: 3 comments
- Individualized/Personal Approaches: 3 comments
- Sector-Specific: 1 comment
- Survey: 1 comment

Don't Know/NA

- n/a
- na
- DN
- n/a
- n/a
- na
- unknown
- n/a
- Don't know...
- n/a
- Not sure, its not really my areas of expertise
- I don't have much insight into this.
- ?

Appreciation

- I found the professional advice particularly helpful
- Keep doing what you are doing now. It works
- keep up the good work
- keep up the good work

- Continue the good work!
- I have no advice, I just think that what you are doing is great as it is
- Carry on
- Keep the faith.
- keep it up
- I think they are doing a great job

Greater presence

- Open regional offices to offer more hands on assistance
- Try to get funding for additional staff...
- to be there for the new startup, difficult to start from scratch, you're creating everything, jobs, new prospects to open a business in a declining area, anything of help in those areas
- use the services of [our co-op] to work closer while being virtual
- Just being there and staying with us as we try to do more for co-ops in Maine.
- Specific to the fishing communities, many communities don't currently meet the rural definition as more and more people move to the coasts. Finding ways to work together even if the community is not a rural one would be very helpful
- Grow.
- Need to keep in touch frequently. [Co-op] has gone the wrong direction for too long and has no idea how to change.

Outreach/Public Education & Awareness

- Education of the meaning of 'co-op' is a huge detail that the general public does not have access to. Outreach is important.
- More advertising!
- Do a co-op session at the NOFA conference and other Agriculture conferences.... and maybe the Energy conferences, too. People really are interested in starting co-ops, but don't know where to find you...
- continue to reach out and make your organization available
- Continue outreach

Improve delivery of services

- Do your homework before you come riding into town and upset the apple cart.
- ...When advisor positions change, the new advisor should be completely informed of the full content of all contracts that they will now be advising. It has been frustrating at times that it seems no one at CDI knows what is exactly in our contract. For example, it was unknown to our advisor that CDI, through our contract, has the task of nominating possible outside board members before our annual meeting in February.
- follow-up phone calls or emails to previous clients
- be consistent, reasonable priced and trustworthy, we want to recommend you but we want to see a simple process, results at reasonable prices for recipients
- A more rigorous and detailed partnership plan with potential clients.

Increase funding

- try to get grants so that cooperatives can be supported in their attempts to get started.

- FOR US, FUNDING ASSISTANCE IS AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY.
- how to fund and deliver these skills to groups is the on-going dilemma; funds are needed for urban projects
- Identify sources of start-up capital for co-ops...

Specific services

- aid in setting up by-laws for co-ops
- Identify how to maximize the value of groups working together strategically. How do we maintain effective communication?
- ...continue to provide tools for networking - especially producer to producer forums...
- Offer organizational development training.

Networking

- ...Also, get in touch with the Solidarity movement people - Julie Matthei in MA is really into this.
- ...partner with other farm organizations to make technical assistance more widespread; attend industry trade shows.
- Strengthen connection with existing resources, like RC&D, USDA, etc.

Individualized/Personal Approaches

- Find new, creative, experimental ways to think outside of the Technical Assistance box that will allow you to create maximum impact and relationship development from your work. (That doesn't mean stop doing TAing, that's very useful! Just start thinking about other, new possibilities as well).
- Perhaps focus more on individualized response to development projects and less on standardized "template" outreach. I imagine we are typical in that our needs are very unique and specific to us.
- Be honest and caring in your day to day work.

Sector Specific

- Focus more on the development of intentional communities.

Survey

- Mention in the next survey to go ahead and fill out survey no matter what stage project is at--I didn't complete because thought we had to report more progress.