



FOOD CO-OP
INITIATIVE

New co-ops start here.

THIS IS OUR WHY

2020 Impacts Report





Letter from the Board Chair

Chair: Richard Dines
Engagement Consultant, Credit Union National Association

The Food Co-op Initiative quickly and creatively responded to the needs of start-up food co-ops after the pandemic hit. FCI provided critical support to groups figuring out how to continue serving their communities and how to navigate new paths to opening for business. Staff expertly pivoted to remote learning and networking to accomplish our objectives.

The Board is proud of the work staff has done to assist development efforts across the country and, in particular, its work to support Black-led co-ops. The Board is recommitting to our own journey in making diversity, equity, and inclusion a central focus of our work. As an organization dedicated to providing critical resources to communities forming democratically owned and controlled institutions that supply nutrition and basic needs, as well as developing local food systems, we strive to ensure that every community has access.

And we were pleased to welcome new members to the Board, including amaha selassie, Olivia Rebanal, and Rich Larochelle. Both amaha and Rich play key leadership roles in start-up projects celebrating opening their doors this year: Gem City Market in Dayton, Ohio and Fredericksburg Food Co-op in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

In cooperation,
Richard Dines

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Jeanie Wells
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Letter from the Executive Director

Last year when I wrote this message, we were starting to feel the full impacts of the Corona virus pandemic. While many businesses shut down to prevent spread, grocery stores were recognized as essential services — something we already knew. But along with that recognition came great responsibility and co-ops responded. Many of the startup co-ops we support understood that even though they did not have a storefront, they had an organization that was committed to the health and welfare of their communities. Food distribution, welfare check-ins, and many other programs popped up across the country bringing some relief where food and social connections were difficult.

At the same time, our country was forced to reckon with the repercussions of systemic racism as the pandemic exacerbated the impact on people of color, making it all too clear that we do not treat everyone equally. Black-led co-ops are on the rise in the U.S., and the attention given to white supremacy and black/brown disenfranchisement spurred dramatic growth for many of these co-ops. Earlier this year the Gem City Co-op opened in Dayton, Ohio and co-ops in Detroit and North Flint are preparing to break ground on their stores this fall. Dozens more are in development.

FCI responded to both trends, quickly kicking off a highly popular series of live webinars intended to help organizing teams understand the dynamics of growth during a pandemic. Expert presenters offered advice and startup co-ops shared their own stories. Black leaders talked about what it means to organize in their communities where outreach methods and capital sources often differ significantly from what used to be considered “typical” co-ops. What started as a plan for a dozen or so webinars turned out to

be almost 40 — now available in our resource library as video-on-demand.

Rural co-ops have always been an area of focus for FCI, and in 2020/2021 we continued to see growth in inquiries, particularly from smaller rural communities where independent grocers are closing shop at an increasing rate. Through partnerships with Kansas State University and other cooperative development centers, we have provided new materials and training for community leaders to encourage them to use cooperative solutions.

As always, we rely on the generosity of the co-op community to make this all possible. Our thanks to all the co-ops, individuals and organizations that support FCI and the startup food co-ops we serve. Your gifts enable us to provide our free support to the diverse and growing number of communities across the United States seeking a better future.

Stuart Reid
Executive Director

As we prepared to go to press, we found out that a dear friend and colleague recently passed away. Allan Gallant died on July 24 at home with his family. Allan helped set the direction for FCI, serving on the original task force and as a member of our board of directors since the very beginning. His vision and conviction made it possible for us to transition from a “project” to an incorporated 501c3 development center thanks to major financial commitment from the Blooming Prairie Foundation. His contributions to the food co-op community are many, from establishing a cooperative food distribution system serving remote Alaskan villages to trying to save the foundering Berkeley Co-op. But more importantly, he was a friend and mentor. He always had words of praise and encouragement for those around him. As he often said to me, “atta boy!” Thank you, Allan.



points of pride

After an unprecedented year, we have much to celebrate!

An amazing virtual **Up & Coming** with record attendance:

- 445 attendees
- 141 first-time attendees
- 82 co-ops/39 states represented
- 42 workshops
- 56 speakers

The **FCI COVIDeo series** launched quickly after the Covid lockdowns began. The series met startups’ need to determine “what now for us?” and pulled in experts and peer leaders from across the country for candid conversations.

Our peer learning program tripled in size, reaching every corner of the nation beginning Oct. 2020 — the perfect time to reactivate and connect startups — helping them learn together and get growing again. Topics have ranged from How to Incorporate, to Onboarding your GM, and everything in between, hosted by industry experts and peers.

“Up & Coming is really terrific for our co-op as a startup! It’s amazing to realize how generous fellow cooperators are with the benefits of their collective experience”.

“This was my first Up & Coming and I learned SO much. Speakers were wonderful and I was able to connect with folks from other Co-ops which was wonderful. I feel much better equipped to continue the progress of our Co-op development.”

- 1301 registrations
- 266 unique attendees (many attended multiple sessions)
- 35 total sessions in the series

- 10 peer groups
- 48 participating food startups
- 65 cooperators each month, average participation

The 2020 Neighboring Co-operator Award

The “Neighboring Co-operator Award” acknowledges special contributions made to the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) and the advancement of our vision by a staff member, director or member of a Member Co-op or partner organization.



We are excited to announce that the recipient of the Neighboring Co-operator Award for 2020 is **JQ Hannah, Assistant Director of Food Co-op Initiative (FCI)**.

JQ’s passion for and support of the next generation of food co-ops is profoundly impactful, both in our region and across the country. In addition to delivering technical assistance, best practices, and cutting-edge innova-

tions in startup development at NFCA’s monthly peer Coordinated Startup Calls, ze also worked with the NFCA and Co-op Development Coordinator, Bonnie Hudspeth, to create the annual “Northeast Startup Day,” bringing together startup organizers in our region for peer learning and deep-dive training. Ze helped to replicate NFCA’s successful peer calls and startup day across the country — FCI is now offering seven additional peer learning groups across the country with over three dozen startups participating monthly. JQ also co-founded the “Up & Coming Conference,” a national annual conference bringing together over 300 startup organizers for workshops, networking, and training to help their food co-op organizing success.

The Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) is a co-operative federation of over 40 food co-ops and startup initiatives across New England.

Read the full award announcement at www.cdf.coop/nfca.

Co-ops that opened in the last 12 months	
	Co-op at 1st, Denver, CO
	Farm to Family Cooperative, Hay Springs, NE
	Fredericksburg Food Cooperative, Fredericksburg, VA
	Gem City Market, Dayton, OH
	South Philly Food Co-op, Philadelphia, PA
	Village Bountiful Grocery Co-op, Unadilla, NY

Our Vision

Strengthening Communities through Cooperation

Food Co-op Initiative paves the way for New Food Co-op Excellence, leading to better fed, healthier communities with local control and connections.

Our Mission

FCI aims to increase the number, success, and sustainability of new food cooperatives delivering access to healthy food in diverse communities across this country. It provides information, training, and technical assistance, as well as seed capital, and engages in research, to blaze, maintain and improve the development path for new food co-ops.



Launch of the new online **FCI Classroom** portal — FCI-classroom.com



Release of the first **Spanish-language** startup guide for food co-ops



Collaboration with the **Rural Grocery Initiative** of Kansas State guiding small rural communities seeking to retain or re-open a grocery store



National recognition by **NFCA** of JQ’s contributions to the food co-op industry (see *article on next page*)



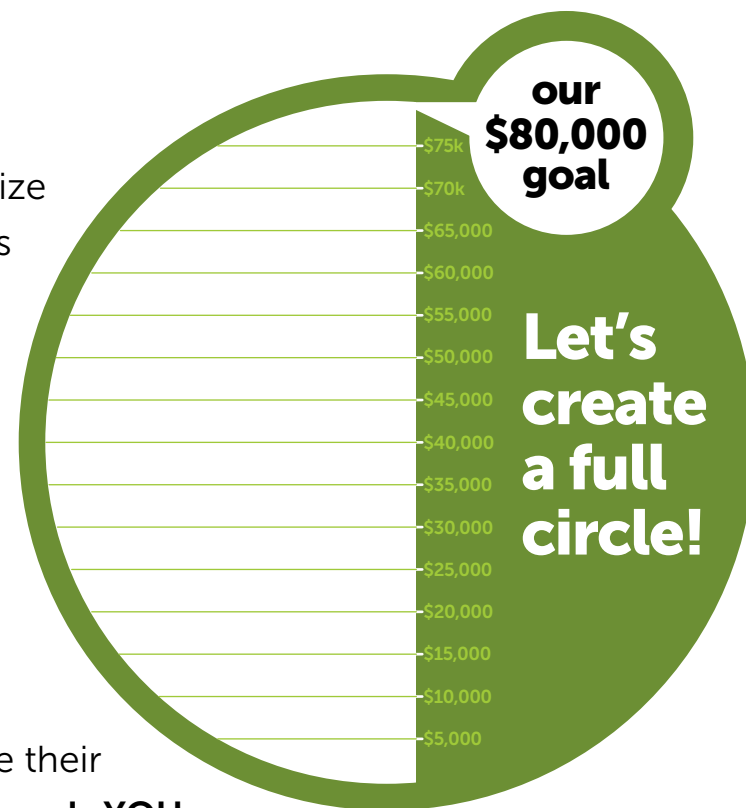
Close and effective collaborations with multiple **Black-led development organizations** resulting in meaningful outcomes

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN: WHY FCI?

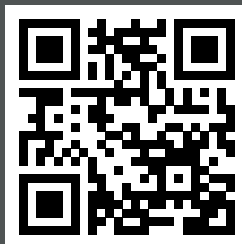
What's YOUR reason for supporting FCI?

Is it because you know food co-ops revitalize communities? Or because our free services to co-op organizers are so vital? Do you love seeing our growing number of peer calls; our new online FCI Classroom; or our rapid response with our wildly popular COVIDeo series to help organizers pivot during the pandemic?

There are as many reasons to support FCI as there are startup food co-ops! Those organizers are working tirelessly to improve their communities. **Startups need FCI. And FCI needs YOU.**



FCI.coop/donate



YES, your co-op can pledge now, be invoiced later! Email us at **info@fci.coop**

and we'll take care of the rest!

I don't know where we would be without FCI's resources, their mentorship, and all the other co-ops we've met through FCI.



The amount of shared knowledge at FCI is just incredible.

— Lacey Reichwald, Whitewater Grocery Co.



"Our leadership team is amazing with a diverse skill set, but none of us has ever started a food co-op before! FCI has been an invaluable lifeline for us — offering **tailored guidance at every step of our development, connecting us with professionals in the co-op world, coordinating monthly peer calls with other start-ups, and offering encouragement and support through the tricky times.** FCI's dedication to building a cooperative community equipped with strong governance, successful business planning and well-developed community support comes through in everything they do. We are so grateful for FCI and all they do to support food cooperatives!"

—Katy Kondrat, Kingston Food Co-op



"Around the country, in every kind of community, people are turning to the cooperative model to ensure access to great food. Before FCI, there was no organized way to help support these communities. Now, 10 years strong, **FCI provides needed resources, development opportunities and support to hundreds of communities** who are fighting to bring good food, good jobs and social justice to their communities."

— Jeanie Wells, FCI Board Member

WHY what we do matters

"The overwhelming support from the community shows how needed and wanted a food co-op is here in Butte, and how much its **residents want to further invest in and support the local food economy.** We are grateful for the support from FCI and other start-ups helping make our co-op vision come to life here in Southwest Montana."

— Krissy Krackowsky, Butte Food Co-op.



"FCI's work is vital because **community ownership is a precious resource that must be nurtured.** There is a very noticeable difference in [a town with a co-op] and the spirit of collective responsibility that it brings. Every place deserves to have a co-op, and FCI helps bring that dream to life when a community resolves to create one."

— Richard Dines, FCI Board Member

startup highlights



Butte Food Co-op

Butte, MT (pop. 33,964)

Stage 2A, feasibility;
incorporated in 2021

**Next milestone: Financial Feasibility,
Pro Forma Development**

The Butte Food Co-Op set records this past winter with 864 member-owner pledges in just over two weeks (including 540 on the first day!) The co-op got its start when a neighborhood grocery store was offered up in "turnkey" condition—almost all the equipment and fixtures were still in place. FCI staff were concerned that the location could not support the lease and overhead costs and encouraged the organizers to get a formal market study. After a site visit, meetings with the owner and market report, the co-op opted to start from scratch and began formal organizing. Support has been phenomenal and with strong leadership and community engagement, the co-op is making great progress.

Detroit People's Food Co-op

Detroit, MI (pop. 670,031)

Stage 3B, implementation;
1278 member-owners

**Next milestone: breaking ground
Spring 2022**

The Detroit People's Food Co-op has been a long time coming, but the wait is nearly over. With 1,285 owners, the co-op will be located in Detroit's historic North End and is a project of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. It will be a unique model, serving an urban, predominately African American, low and moderate-income community. The co-op will be within the Detroit Food Commons, a \$17 million dollar project that will incorporate community space and community kitchens as well as the food co-op. The 17,000 sq. ft. building is new construction, totally owned and controlled by the community.

Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op

Kodiak, AK (pop. 6,022)

Stage 2A, feasibility;
incorporated in 2016

**Next milestone: finish their
Business Plan**

Kodiak is a small, island community south of Anchorage—connected only by ferry and air transport. Food access takes on a whole new meaning when deliveries are dependent on weather and staggering freight costs. FCI has been working with Kodiak Harvest since 2016 and have provided board training, site evaluation, and business planning support. Today Kodiak Harvest has 548 owners, more than 25% of the local households. They are running weekly veggie markets and have a small online store featuring Alaskan products, including Kodiak Harvest sockeye salmon. As the co-op continues to grow, they have their eyes on a prime commercial site and hope to open a full-service grocery co-op soon.

real world impacts of FCI's work

Years FCI has
supported co-ops:

17

\$465 million

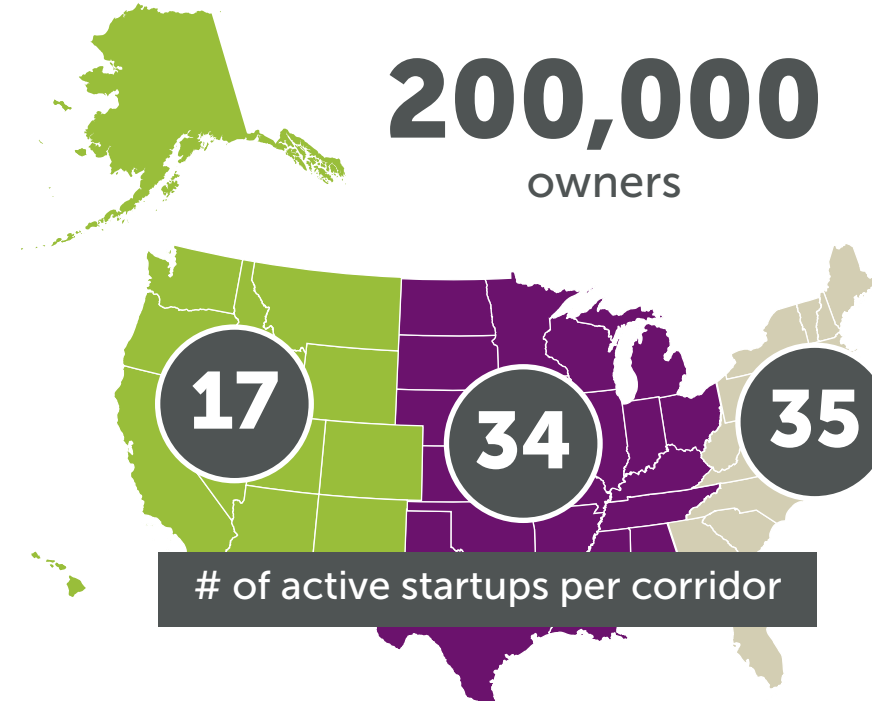
in annual sales

\$107 million

in local food purchased at startups

200,000

owners



166

co-ops opened
since 2006

(FCI provided resources and
support to almost all of them)

4,278

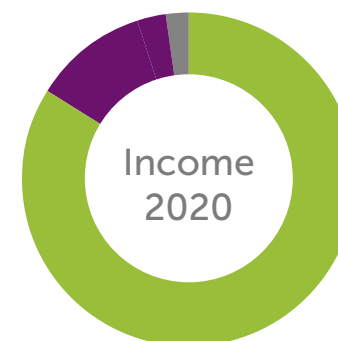
new jobs (FTE)
created at startups:

84

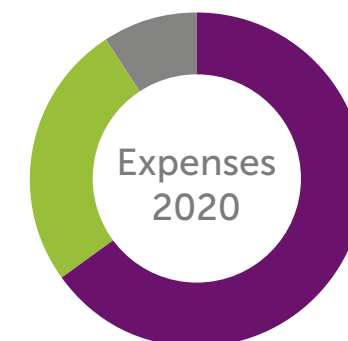
active startups served
by FCI right now

73

new inquiries
in 2020



Grants **84%**
Contributions **14%**
Other income **2%**



Programming **65%**
Mgmt & General **26%**
Fundraising **9%**



FOOD CO-OP INITIATIVE

New co-ops start here.

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Savage, MN 55378

844-324-2667
www.FCI.coop

Legacy Donors



Sustaining Donors

Flatbush Food Co-op*
River Valley Co-op*

**Combined, these two co-ops have contributed over \$60,000 through their owner patronage programs.*

Ashland Food Co-op, Ashland, OR
Basics Cooperative Natural Foods, Janesville, WI
Boise Food Co-op, Boise, ID
Briar Patch Food Co-op, Grass Valley, CA
Chequamegon Food Co-op, Ashland, WI
City Center Market, Cambridge, MN
City Market, Onion River Co-op, Burlington, VT
Cook County Whole Foods Co-op, Grand Marais, MN
The Co-op Natural Foods, Sioux Falls, SD
Cultivate Community Food Co-Op, Benicia, CA
Eastside Food Co-op, Minneapolis, MN
Fiddleheads Co-op, New London, CT
Friendly City Food Co-op, Harrisonburg, VA

GreenTree Cooperative Grocery, Mt. Pleasant, MI
Green Top Grocery, Bloomington, IL
Maple City Market, Goshen, IN
The Merc, Lawrence, KS
Menomonie Market Food Co-op, Menomonie, WI
Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury, VT
Mississippi Market, St Paul, MN
Monadnock Community Market Co-op, Keene, NH
Monadnock Moon Food Co-op, Keene, NH
Neighborhood Co-op Grocery, Carbondale, IL
Oneota Community Food Co-op, Decorah, IA
Oryana Natural Foods Market, Traverse City, MI
Outpost Natural Foods, Milwaukee, WI
Ozark Natural Foods, Fayetteville, AR
People's Food Co-op La Crosse, La Crosse, WI
Roanoke Co+op, Roanoke, VA
Seward Community Co-op, Minneapolis, MN
Skagit Valley Food Co-op, Mount Vernon, WA

Spiral Natural Foods Co-op & Grocery, Hastings, MN
Sugar Beet Co-op, Oak Park, IL
Three Rivers Market, Knoxville, TN
Viroqua Food Co+op, Viroqua, WI
Valley Natural Foods, Burnsville, MN
Wedge Co-op TCCP, Minneapolis, MN
Wheatsville Food Co-op, Austin, TX
Whole Foods Community Co-op, Duluth, MN
Willimantic Food Cooperative, Willimantic CT
Willy Street Co-op, Madison, WI
Ypsilanti Food Co-op, Ypsilanti, MI

Special Thanks

...to the many donors who continue to show their belief in FCI by supporting our work!