



FOOD CO-OP INITIATIVE

New co-ops start here.

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News from the world of startup food co-ops & those who support them.

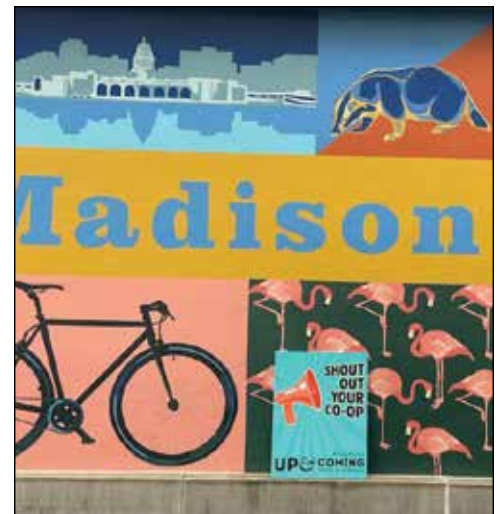
See you
SOON!



Up & Coming returns, better than ever

This May 19th-21st the Up & Coming Startup Food Co-op Conference returns to being in person in Madison, WI, and will be hosted for the third year by the Willy Street Co-op.

"We're incredibly excited to be in person once again," says conference founder and co-organizer Deb Trocha, Executive Director of the Indiana Cooperative Development Center, "while we had great attendance for our virtual conference in 2021, the most common feedback we got from attendees was, 'we cannot wait to be in person again'. There is something very special about this conference and the community it creates that cannot be fully recreated online."



continued on p. 4

Is something exciting happening at your co-op? We could feature it in our next issue! Email us at info@fci.coop

A message from Stuart



It's that most wonderful time of the year! Holidays? Spring? Taxes? NO, it's the **Up & Coming conference!** Our partner and the conference

founder, Deb Trocha, along with all of us at FCI have been working on this since before the 2021 conference was over. We like to cook it long and slow like a pot of beans or a great BBQ. Last year we had to go online to meet, but this year we are back in Madison, Wisconsin where we are really looking forward to seeing you all in person. As always, we will have a great lineup of presentations for cooperators in every stage of development.

In other news, FCI is happy to welcome our second intern from the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg. **Gina Digulio** is a junior there and will be with us this semester helping to collect and analyze impact data from the co-ops that have opened since 2006. So, if that sounds like you, please give us a hand by replying promptly to our very short survey. We rely on this information to let others know how big an impact new food co-ops are making!

—Stuart Reid
FCI Executive Director
Stuart@FCI.coop



Co-op Updates:

The Bethlehem Food

Co-Op topped a very busy fall by celebrating their 10th anniversary in October. In early September, the board gathered with representatives from their developer and construction company on the site where their store will be built, just prior to the demolition of the existing building. Work will begin on the four-story mixed-use building, which will be anchored by the co-op (projected opening in early 2023).



The co-op also celebrated hitting the 1,000 member mark, announced the award of a \$2.9 million grant on its behalf, and launched a Naming Opportunities initiative to fund several co-op projects.

The Dorchester Food Co-op passed their 1,200 owner goal ahead of schedule this month, reaching 1,268 owners. They signed a ten-year lease with a non-profit development corporation to occupy 6,000 ft² of commercial space in a mixed use building now under construction.



They are now finishing construction documents for the store buildout with their architect and construction manager and have received a zoning variance for the Co-op Cafe space in the store.

Buildout of the co-op's space should start in May or June with a scheduled opening at the end of 2022. The Co-op has raised over \$2.6 million for the project and is closing in on their \$3 million goal for the project. A general manager search is underway.

We announced last issue that **North Flint Food Market** had broken ground on their future store site, but couldn't resist this great photo of GM Arlene Wilborn and Project Leader, Pastor Reginal Flynn.

Things are moving forward in spite of some pandemic-related delays on equipment and unexpected contingencies in the site development. But they are still smiling and hoping for a late 2022 opening.



It's Hard Hat Season!

Wild Onion Market

currently has 1,215 Owners and 151 of those are local businesses! They share the co-op's mission and vision and support the grassroots effort to grow a community-owned, democratically run, full-service grocery store. The co-op loves to highlight local merchants by featuring them on social media. The co-op continues to move closer to opening the doors of their store at 7007 N Clark St in Rogers Park! You can watch the big site reveal video here: <https://fb.watch/bEC6QiXsGD> (Hard hats coming soon!)



Detroit Peoples' Food Co-op

has acquired all 10 (yes, ten!) properties needed to go forward and are ready to close once the City of Detroit finishes its building approval process. Building permits are being reviewed by about 12 city departments, with hopes for positive news before the end of March. They are expecting to close on \$7 million in financing in the next week or two, followed by construction start within 3 weeks. Construction should be complete in June 2023. In the meantime, the co-op hopes to hire their GM by September. Get a site look here.



And speaking of site reveal— **Assabet Co-op Market** has agreed to lease space at Victory Plaza, 86 Powder Mill Road in Maynard, and will allow them

to build a beautiful grocery store with approximately 6,000-square-feet of retail space. (Watch their on-location site announcement by clicking here.)

Food Shed Co-op

in Woodstock, IL has hired Peter Waldmann as their new General Manager. Peter began in January. He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge in building grocery and natural food stores. Peter and his wife Amy will be moving to Woodstock from Seattle, WA where he was most recently Director of Operations for *PCC Community Markets*.



SHOUT OUT YOUR CO-OP

REGISTER NOW
for the 2022
UP & COMING
food co-op conference

Early bird discount ends April 21
www.UpandComing.coop
...and we'll see you in Madison, May 19-21!

This Year's Theme

To succeed, startup food co-ops must boldly, proudly get their co-ops into the spotlight. Too often startups struggle to get the word out about their co-ops and don't always use their co-op's brand, nor shout from the rooftops enough about all their co-op can do for their community. Hence, this year's Up & Coming theme, "Shout Out Your Co-op!" We are challenging every startup attending this year to come wearing their co-op T-shirts and bringing their co-op bags, stickers, hats and more. There will be awards for startups that show the co-op pride by draping themselves in their co-op's swag and colors — the more creative the better!

Thursday, Pre-Conference

Up & Coming 2022 will offer a pre-conference day of special offerings to allow for in-depth conversations and learning. **Note: these pre-conference activities are add-ons to regular conference registration.**

For the second year, the National Black Food and Justice Alliance (NBFJA) and Up & Coming will be co-hosting a space on Thursday for Black startup food co-op organizers, with all content programmed by NBFJA. "We value this space as one for Black people and Black-led co-op workers. Attendance is limited to Black participants only,"



shares Dr. Jasmine Ratliff, Co-Executive Director of the NBFJA. "This is a crucial move towards honoring safety while our co-ops grow and resist systems of racism." Registration to participate in this space is limited to 50.

Two additional bonus half-day intensives are open to all on Thursday, with pre-registration: "How Startups Impact the Local Economy" with Kevin Edberg of Cooperative Development Services (limit 50), and "Strategy. Timeline. GO!" with JQ Hannah of Food Co-op Initiative.

New at Up & Coming 2022

Cafe Conversations — The Up & Coming Conference's offerings have evolved over the years in direct response to



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UP & COMING
food co-op conference

Columinate Consultants Presenting:



**Jade Barker, Cassia Herron
Jamila Medley, Don Moffitt
LaDonna Sanders Redmond,
Ben Sandel, Amaha Sellassie**

Columinate.coop

“We are challenging every startup attending this year to come wearing their co-op T-shirts and bringing their co-op bags, stickers, hats and more. There will be awards for startups that show the co-op pride...”

the needs expressed by our attendees, getting better every year. This year, we’ve found a way to meet the often expressed wish of attendees to “have more time to share ideas and experiences with peers!”

On both Friday and Saturday, there will be facilitated peer conversations in the afternoon where attendees will come together in our new Cafe sessions. The peers will collectively choose the most important topics to discuss from that day’s workshops and then break into dynamic, shifting peer groupings to discuss these topics, capture insights, and identify where there might be more information/tools that we, as a movement, need to succeed. These sessions will be incredible opportunities to build connections with peer co-ops and organizers from across the country as well as to solidify the day’s learning.

“There are a record number of sponsors already signed up to be a part of Up & Coming 2022,” says JQ Hannah, Assistant Director of FCI. “This reflects the growing number of expertise providers who are focused on serving the startup food co-op movement. You’re going to see that growing diversity of experts represented in the sessions this year as well.” With dozens of sessions being presented by trusted industry leaders, new thinkers in the startup space, and startup food co-op peers, we are predicting this will be Up & Coming’s most dynamic year yet.

Registration is now open for Up & Coming 2022, with early bird pricing of only \$225 available through April 21st. upandcoming.coop/register

*“When our **water heater exploded**, Dane at Kapatoes walked us through it **calmly and promptly**, turning what could’ve been a major crisis into an **easily handled situation.**”*

Krista, GM of Tidal Creek Cooperative



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Look for these Firebrand-led sessions at U&C:



Darnell Adams

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Black Food Sovereignty



Kaye Kirsch

| Hiring Your First GM
Case Study:
| Prairie Food Co-op –
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WARM BODIES vs HOT PROSPECTS



Joel Kopischke
seven roots consultant

Look into your startup co-op crystal ball. Can you see the glorious day when you hire your first general manager? Are you utilizing an organized plan for hiring? Are you hiring the best candidate (not just the first person who showed interest)? Are you giving them all the onboarding, training and support they need? Once they start working, are you holding them accountable?

I hope you said “Yes!” to all of the above.

Your board would never imagine answering “No” to any of the above, would you? Well, maybe not when considering a GM, but how about with the board and committees? Are we holding high standards for our leadership, or are we just happy someone is stepping up? Gulp. Logging volunteer hours isn’t easy and fresh legs tend to be a welcome potential reprieve in the journey to co-opdom. Still, your co-op and its member-owners are best served when you create and train your board with intention, just as when approaching GM hiring.

How to do it: As early as possible in the formation of your board, *make a list of the qualities and skills that you want on your board.* Then, *revisit this list at least every year.* What to look for: Individuals with previous board and/or co-op experience can be very helpful, as are connections in the community. It can be helpful to have folks with financial,

legal, or real estate experience, but as your project progresses, you’ll likely want to use outside professionals in those areas. That’s to ensure you’re relying on unconflicted expertise and to eliminate the potential appearance of impropriety. That said, past experience isn’t everything. Be sure to leave space for capable, dedicated folks who may not have had the opportunities to build flashy resumes and connections. (In other words, remember that dominant culture gatekeeping has historically given preference to cishet white guys!)

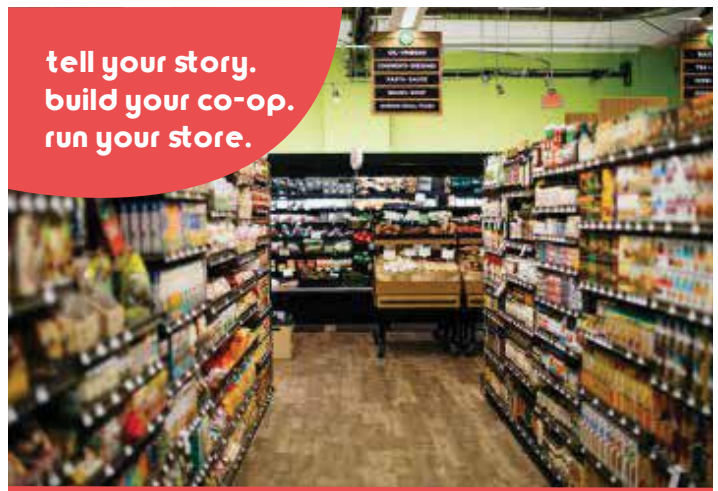
What to look for: So called “soft skills” — good communication, ability to work well in groups, and cultural competency — are critical attributes of a strong board member. Many co-ops seek to build an organizational culture that is inclusive of difference and serves broad communities. It’s critical to build leadership that reflects the folks you hope to serve, particularly in historically underserved communities. Beyond that, invest in education around issues of

justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion to create a leadership group that understands the privilege and responsibility associated with their role in the organization.

Education: Once your board is assembled, and as new board members join your ranks, it's wise to invest in training. The job of the board carries legal obligations and fiduciary responsibilities that aren't always intuitive. Get some help understanding best practices for how co-op boards can be highly productive. And make that a recurring project — as new directors come on board (pun intended), be sure new arrivals get in-depth education — a great refresher for existing directors too!

Ongoing standards: Once your board is set up for success, maintain a high bar for accountability and behavior. A basic of good board work is to establish clear written expectations, and then hold ourselves accountable to those expectations. Everyone is busy, and of course there will be times that things don't go as planned, but it's important to develop a culture of not letting things slide. And accountability doesn't have to be personal or punitive in nature — it can be done with kindness and a focus on what's best for the co-op. Instilling these practices early in your organizational culture will not just help the board function well, it will draw the type of directors (and ultimately, GM) that will position the co-op as a positive, healthy business.

Final Thoughts: It can be a tough balancing act. We all want to be welcoming to and grateful for those who offer to serve. And, in order to thrive, we also need high standards.



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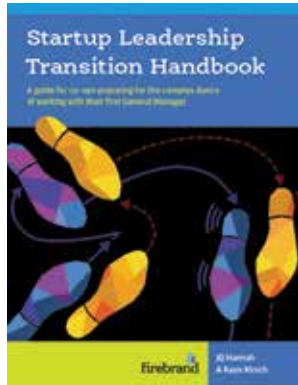
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cabotcheese.coop/our-farmer-co-op/



New Resources!

We have lots of new resources available in our Resource Library this year! Thanks to our friends at Firebrand Cooperative, you can now learn from these free downloads:



Startup Leadership Transition Handbook

Written by JQ Hannah of FCI and Kaye Kirsch of Firebrand, this handbook provides your startup with the vital information you need as you transition from a working board to a governing board. Includes how to run a successful GM hiring process; developing skills around reporting expectations and accountability; building an on-boarding process for your new GM; identifying and addressing yellow flags, and much more.

fci.coop/the-startup-leadership-transition-handbook



Planning an Impactful Annual Meeting

Your Annual Meeting is a huge opportunity to engage with your ownership, but what should a great meeting include? This guide contains examples and useful checklists, plus explanations of how to use storytelling to put financial reporting in context.

fci.coop/planning-an-impactful-annual-meeting



Core Messaging and How to Use It.

When used strategically, core messaging is one of the most valuable tools for marketers. This often-overlooked element of your brand identity can make your audience start listening again; it can make the work of your marketing team easier; and it will make coordination with in-store activities more seamless. Examples and breakdowns of successful messaging plans are included.

fci.coop/using-core-messaging-to-transform-your-marketing



Store Opening Marketing & Messaging Guide

Strategic shifts in messaging and multi-channel campaigns-- they will greatly impact your co-op's initial sales, and they need to be planned well in advance of your store's opening. To equip startups to meet this challenge, Firebrand Cooperative has released this NEW tool in partnership with Food Co-op Initiative.

fci.coop/marketing-messaging-guide/

Action Guides

FCI's Action Guides are exactly that: Handy guides that give you all the essential information to take *action!* Quick to read, with charts, forms and tips to get you started strong.



The FCI Store Audit Guide

This is a tool for new co-op organizers to sharpen their vision and for open co-ops to see their blind spots. The guide includes extensive survey forms that can be used to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of another store's operations. Store audits can be an excellent collaborative exercise between co-ops!

fci.coop/store-audit-guide/

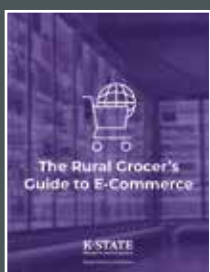


You've Got Your Market Study... Now What?

You have had your market study done and the results are in! Soon after receiving them, many startup boards find themselves wondering what they should do with the data and how to share it with owners. In this overview piece, we'll talk about how to get the most out of this big, important milestone you've just reached.

fci.coop/youve-got-your-market-study-now-what/

The Rural Grocer's Guide to E-Commerce



The Rural Grocery Initiative and the Kansas State University is a wonderful partner that FCI has worked with for years. They focus on rural communities that are losing their stores, especially in Kansas and surrounding states but much of their work, including this excellent guide, will be valuable to anyone.

www.ruralgrocery.org/publications/resources/Ecommerce_Guide_Rural_Grocery_Final.pdf

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FCI's next leap forward

*A note from Stuart Reid,
FCI Executive Director*



When I started working with Food Co-op 500 some 16 years ago, I told myself that this was the job I wanted for the rest of my career. Well, my wish is coming true. I am planning to retire from full-time work at the end of 2022. I'll probably be around for a while, helping out with a co-op project here and there, but it's time to move on and make room for new leadership, enthusiasm, and opportunities. The FCI board and staff planned for a thorough strategic planning process this year and finding a new Executive Director will now be a big part of it.

Cooperatives have been here for me since the late 1970's, providing employment, learning, friendship and yes, even food. Over the years I have made many friends, visited your wonderful communities, and learned at least as much from you as I have been able to share. I hope that those relationships will continue whenever and wherever our paths cross.