



North Flint Food Market (November)



Uproot Market & Eatery (October)



Prairie Food Co-op (July)

# 2025 IMPACTS REPORT



Southside Market & Café (October)



**FOOD CO-OP  
INITIATIVE**

New co-ops start here.

## CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS



**Chair: Steve Cooke** (he/him)  
*General Manager, Friendly City Food Co-op, Harrisonburg, Virginia*



**Vice Chair: Anne Misak** (she/her)  
*Managing Director, Healthy Food Financing Initiative, Reinvestment Fund*



**Secretary: Jamila Medley** (she/her)  
*Consultant in change management, leadership development, governance, DEI & participatory management*



**Darnell Adams** (she/her)  
*Leadership Coach, Facilitator, Strategist, Firebrand Cooperative*



**Richard Dines** (he/him)  
*Senior Director, Credit Union Awareness, LLC*



**Gerardo Espinoza** (he/him)  
*Executive Director, Local Enterprise Assistance Fund (LEAF)*



**John Guerra** (he/him)  
*Business, Real Estate, and Store Development Director, National Co+op Grocers (NCG) Store Development*



**amaha sellassie** (he/him)  
*Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Applied Social Issues, Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio*

## OUR VISION

A world where all communities have the power and ability to build a thriving cooperative food system that provides them with the food they need and want.

## OUR MISSION

We partner with communities to build a more just food system, providing critical support as they organize and open community-owned grocery stores.

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## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

"The answer is always More Cooperation!" are the wise words of a colleague from the cooperative world. Food Co-op Initiative has been living that reality as our Board reimagines governance in a topsy turvy world. Leaning in where others back away and cooperating with our mighty team to ensure start-up co-ops get the knowledge and enthusiastic support they need to get up and running on the right foundation. Before, we talked about a "co-op in a box" which only needed people and financial equity; we now know that there are many paths to starting successful food co-ops.

We hired someone who knows more about starting food co-ops than just about anyone in this country when we hired JQ Hannah as our Executive Director. Leading the apex organization for start-ups with a lean and serene group of tactical experts by sharing the knowledge and lifting up those who begin to doubt the power of their organizing strength. Together we can all build a more cooperative world!

In cooperation,

## Our deepest gratitude to our outgoing Board Members:

Jeanie Wells (since 2020) | Richard Larochelle (since 2021) | Valeria (Val) Roach (since 2023)



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2025 was a tough year. Oppression reached new heights, economic and social, in a way that hit the shoulders hard of those who have long been in this fight without a choice, and in a way that woke up those that had been mostly watching from the sidelines. 2025 for FCI meant, like many small nonprofits, seeing some of our foundational funding come into question and even crumble as we worked to strengthen our programs and resolve to support the startup food co-op movement.

*But strengthen we did.* Welcoming **Chris Dilley** as our first ever Director of Startup Support and **Mercedes Gosby** as our first ever Content and Data Manager has grown FCI's ability to show up for startups and to expand both our vision and our actions to support the movement exponentially. Chris got right to work making our flagship Peer Learning Group program far more robust while also utilizing his talents to build a farther-reaching network of shared knowledge and collaborative work across partner organizations from National Co+op Grocers, to regional cooperative development centers, to other organizations working to get food to communities that need it like the Independent Grocers Association and Argus Farm Stop.

Mercedes brought in a powerful new perspective on FCI's work and the food co-op movement from day one. Where Chris and I, both entering this work from being general managers of food co-ops, see things through that lens, Mercedes comes to FCI with a professional background in problem solving, working to get the tools needed to the people who need them, and educating them in the use of those tools in the tech industry. She immediately saw who FCI was not yet serving who could be empowered through the cooperative model, and at the same time saw our rich-but-hard-to-find library of articles, videos, and tools as a hidden treasure that her skills could bring to the light of day for better access for all.

Together, we as a team have evolved how we see and deliver FCI's work, and right on time. 2025 was arguably the toughest year yet in FCI's history for communities to organize and open new food co-ops. Shifts in the availability of our time and money that everyone felt in 2025 have brought tremors to all food co-ops. Things are changing, rapidly. And in uncertain times we are all going to struggle more in very real ways. While startups did struggle in many ways in 2025, they also innovated in brilliant ways and triumphed, as you'll see in the coming pages.

I hope you enjoy this window into both how FCI supported the movement through a turbulent 2025 and into how startups stood tall and led through it.

In Cooperation,

### FCI STAFF 2025



**Faye Mack** (she/her)  
Outgoing Executive  
Director



**JQ Hannah** (ze/zir)  
Incoming Executive  
Director



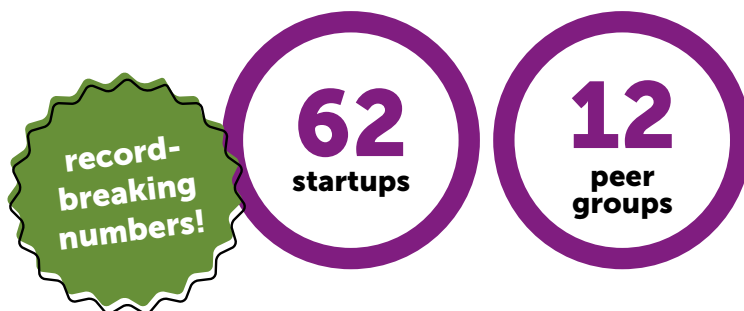
**Chris Dilley** (he/him)  
Director of Startup  
Support



**Mercedes Gosby**  
(she/her)  
Content & Data  
Manager

# FCI PEER LEARNING GROUPS

2025: 5TH YEAR OF THE PROGRAM



FCI's Peer Learning Groups is our flagship program and fundamental to how we both support and learn from the startup movement.

Co-op organizers, grouped by Framework Stage, meet monthly with trained facilitators. The hour-long sessions are organized in one of a few ways: introduction to the basic concepts of a topic by the facilitator with discussion, a training by an outside expert, or as peer sharing.

Peer Learning Groups has the impact of bringing co-op organizers together to access the latest tools and information to meet current co-op development challenges, all while being in community with and accountable to each other. Registration for Peer Learning Groups has increased every year since we kicked the program off in 2020, with 62 co-ops participating in 2025.

In this peer group setting, FCI hears the real life challenges communities are facing as they work to solve food access needs collectively, which informs what we do and how we do it going forward.

**80% of co-ops attending in 2025 have signed up to return in 2026.**

Program coordinator and FCI's Director of Startup Support, Chris Dilley, says, "80% of co-ops attending in 2025 have signed up to return in 2026. In the course of the 2025 peer group season, seven co-op grocery stores opened, four of which were active in Peer Learning Groups. Many progressed to the next stage of development as well."





Since 2021, cooperators across the U.S. have gathered for FCI Live, the only virtual conference for learning best practices for starting, organizing and opening food co-ops.

Experienced food cooperators equip communities with the knowledge they need for startup success, and lead powerful co-op movement conversations such as:

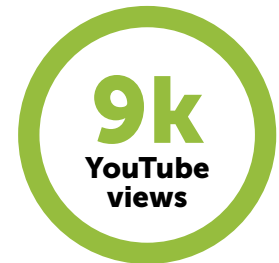
**Finding Feasibility**

**Dissecting the Definition of Healthy**

**Expanding Your Fundraising Reach**

**Lessons from the First 2 Years: Navigating Post-Open**

FCI had a record number of sponsors in 2025 (double from last year!), which made it possible for thousands of people to access these conference sessions for free and without time-consuming travel.



Watch the recordings on YouTube! .....



"I appreciated the concise and high quality presentation. This was excellent information and food for thought. It should be required of all board members!"

— 2025 FCI Live Attendee

# BECAUSE WE EXIST

**Because We Exist** (BWE) was a brand new virtual series from FCI in 2025, entirely sponsored and made possible by our Full Circle Co-op donors. BWE was born from a thought shared with us by a GM of a now-established “3rd wave” startup: *Starting a food co-op is hard work. How can we share our stories of startup success with those organizing today and celebrate all that organizing work makes possible?* That thought turned into a free, year-end celebration of the stories and impact of startup food co-ops.

Food cooperators joined us virtually in early December to learn about these “3rd wave” startup food co-ops and all the powerful ways they are improving their communities:

**River Valley Co-op** — Northampton and Southhampton, MA; opened its first store in 2008 and has served as a mentor and advocate for many 3rd wave startups coming after them, while creating an incredible, values-driven impact on their community.

**Green Top Grocery** — Bloomington, IL; opened May 2017, the same week a major natural foods chain competitor opened. This led to some rocky first years, but the co-op found its footing and has activated a thriving co-op community.

**South Philly Food Co-op** — Philadelphia, PA; opened Christmas Eve 2020, at the height of the pandemic. This small-but-mighty startup has thrived both as a grocery store and nexus of community since that day.

**Detroit People’s Food Co-op** — Detroit, MI; opened May 2024. Unapologetically Black-led, it was seeded by the work of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, but the co-op quickly became fully owned and organized by the larger community!

**Market 166 Grocery & Kitchen** — East Point, GA; This Black-led startup food co-op began organizing in 2018 to bring access to high-quality fresh foods.



Watch the recordings on YouTube! .....





## FCI Food Co-op Development Framework **TOOL & RESOURCE LAUNCH**

In August 2025, we launched the FCI Food Co-op Development Framework, a way of representing the food co-op startup process. It was created with input from both startups and startup experts to create a shared language of universal best practices that speak to the needs of all startup food co-ops aiming for success. How those best practices and milestones are met can take multiple forms — there is no one cookie-cutter way!

FCI's vision for the Framework is that it will be a foundation upon which FCI and other co-op development practitioners can layer on open-source tools and expanded explorations of the key concepts. The more resources available to startup organizers, the better.

Before the end of 2025 we were well underway with our first three of these tools:

**FCI Framework Development Framework Action Guide** and companion tool **Framework Checklist**, which provides a step-by-step illustration of tasks to be completed in each stage of development. It also links directly to excellent resources from partners and practitioners to help flesh out key concepts.

**Stage 1 Curriculum** for use in our FCI Peer Learning Groups. This 9-session course is designed to introduce the basic elements of food co-op development using the Framework as the core. Some specific session topics include Vision, the Areas of Work, Business Concept, Incorporation, and Member Program Development. FCI is convening three Stage 1 peer groups in 2026 with a total of 25 co-op communities. The curriculum will be tested and improved through that process.

*Do you have an idea for a tool to add to the Framework Toolbox?  
Email us at [info@fci.coop](mailto:info@fci.coop) and let's discuss!*

Find the new  
Framework  
tools here:



# OUR IMPACT

We've been supporting startups for 20 years!

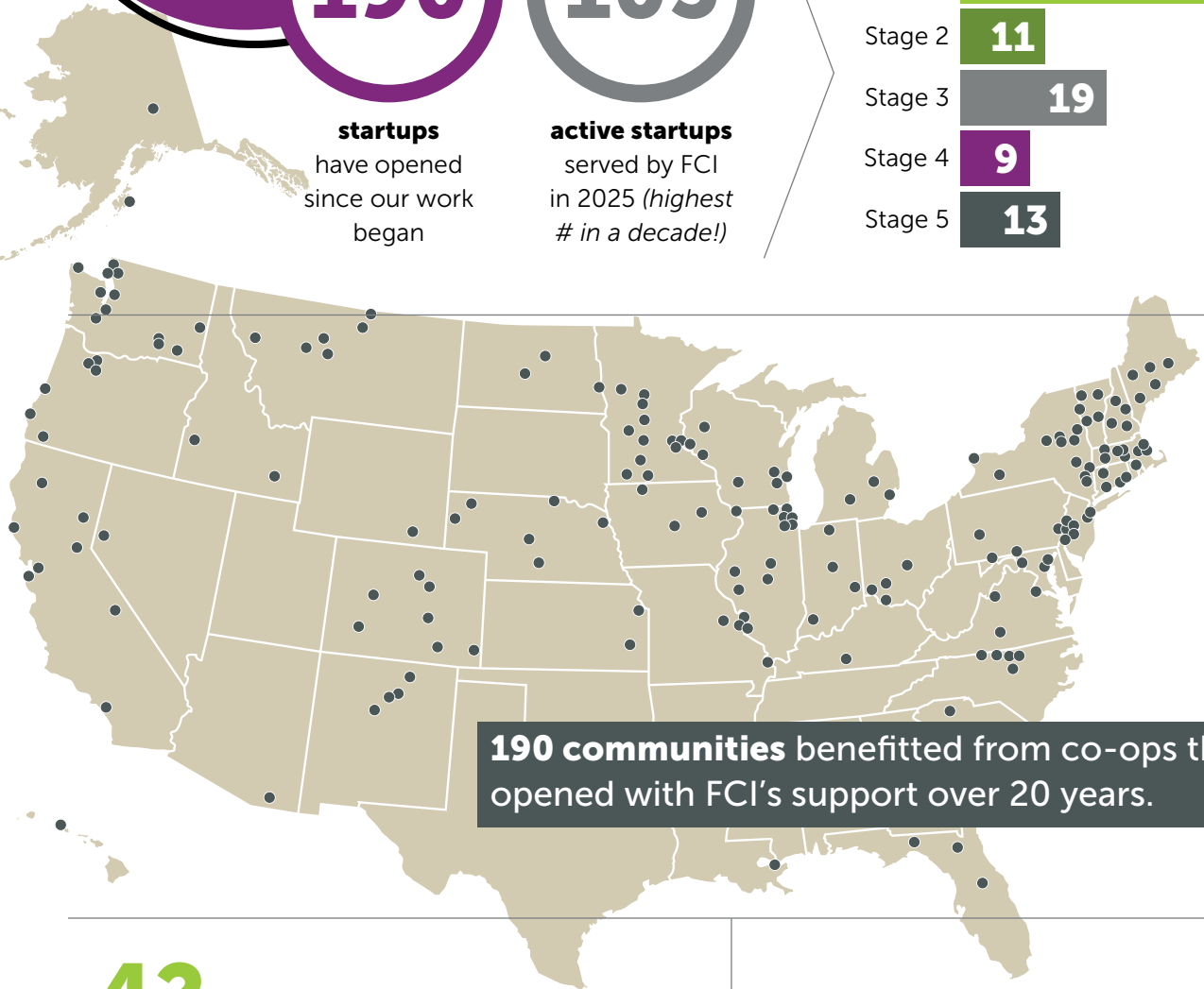
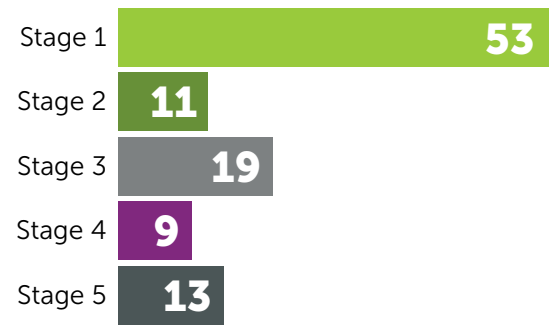
**190**

**startups** have opened since our work began

**105**

**active startups** served by FCI in 2025 (*highest # in a decade!*)

## Current startup co-ops by stage:



**190 communities** benefitted from co-ops that opened with FCI's support over 20 years.

**42**

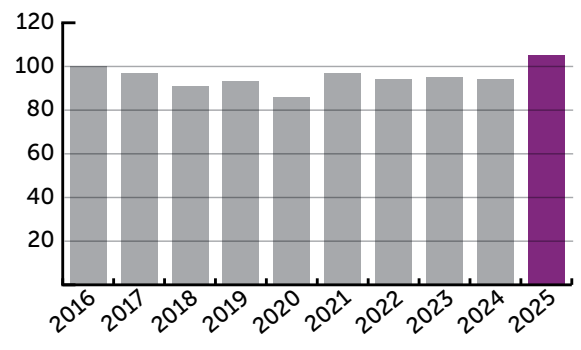
**RURAL**  
(stages 1-5)



**63**

**NON-RURAL**  
(stages 1-5)

## Actively Organizing Startups by Year Stages 1-5



# Celebrating

## CO-OPS THAT OPENED THEIR DOORS IN 2025!

Seven startup food co-ops stocked their shelves and welcomed their member-owners and greater community to shop for the first time in 2025. FCI was honored to have worked closely with several of these startups: **North Flint Food Market**, **Prairie Food Co-op**, **Southside Market & Cafe**, **Tip Top Co-op Community Market**, and **Spice & Grain: Fryeburg Co-op**. We have supported and learned alongside some of them since their start. Congratulations to all seven co-ops, their owners, and their communities!



### PRAIRIE FOOD CO-OP

LOMBARD, IL

*Opened July 9*



### SOUTHSIDE MARKET & CAFE

CHICAGO, IL

*Opened October 24*



### UPROOT MARKET & EATERY

BATTLE CREEK, MI

*Opened October 25*



### NORTH FLINT FOOD MARKET

FLINT, MI

*Opened November 21*

## CONVERSIONS THAT OPENED!

Some new food co-ops purchase existing grocery businesses that were for sale — these are called “conversion” startup co-ops. They keep stores in their community open that otherwise might have closed, and they are a rapidly growing trend within startups!

In 2024, FCI created our *Converting Your Grocery Store To a Co-op Action Guide* about the unique steps needed for conversion to a cooperative, and in 2025 we launched our first-ever Peer Learning Group specifically for conversions! Congratulations to these conversion co-ops that opened in 2025:



### TOM'S NATURAL FOODS CO-OP

CLINTON, NY (*Opened June 4*)



### TIPTOP CO-OP COMMUNITY MARKET

BROOKFIELD, MA (*Opened July 31*)



### SPICE & GRAIN: FRYEBURG CO-OP

FRYEBURG, ME (*Opened October 5*)

# STARTUP H

Featuring startups utilizing FCI programs that are making great



## WINCHESTER FOOD CO-OP

Winchester, VA (pop. 27,800) **Stage 1**

Next milestone: Full feasibility study (market study & pro forma)

The organizers at Winchester Food Co-op have done a brilliant job of capturing their community's imagination. They launched membership in early 2025, stayed in the public eye via newspaper articles, tabling at events, community meetings, and talking up the co-op on a local radio show. They ended 2025 with 130 members, and progressed to FCI's Stage 2 peer group in 2026.



## FARM TO CITY HARVEST STORE

Farmer City, IL (pop. 1900) **Stage 2**

Next milestone: Identify a business plan that works in the location they own

The town of Farmer City lost its grocery store in 2015. Organizing for Farm to City Harvest Store, a community-owned solution, started organizing in 2023, and operated a CSA out of a location in downtown Farmer City during the 2025 season. Attendees of FCI's Marigold Stage 2 peer learning group, organizers announced that a local benefactor provided the cash for the co-op, owned then by about 70 community members, to purchase their location outright.

“The peer learning groups and FCI’s framework, checklists, and Live sessions gave our team the tools and confidence to keep moving forward — and connecting with the broader community of organizers through the Up & Coming conference reminded us that we’re part of something much bigger than our own corner of Virginia.”

— Bertha Thomas, Board President  
Winchester Food Co-op, Winchester, VA

# HIGHLIGHTS

progress and taking action that other startups can learn from.

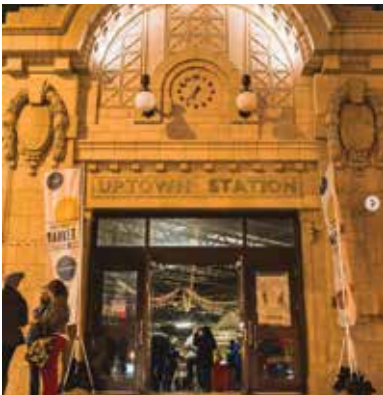


## WASATCH COOPERATIVE MARKET

*Salt Lake City, UT (pop. 1.3M) Stage 3*

Next milestone: Complete build out, hire a GM, open the store!

Membership at Wasatch grew by over 30% in 2025, from 1200 to nearly 1600 at the end of the year. They completed store design on their location, identified all their funding including a strong commitment from their landlord to support construction, and identified an Interim General Manager to help them get the doors open, moving them from Stage 3 to Stage 4 as they headed into 2026.



## CHICAGO MARKET

*Chicago, IL (pop. 2.7M) Stage 4*

Next milestone: Finish filling the funding gap, start construction

It was touch-and-go for Chicago Market through much of 2025, as any of their organizers would tell you. They worked hard to stay positive, be creative, and find the next local official to introduce to the potential of the Uptown neighborhood in Chicago having a community owned grocery store. In the end, they stayed ahead of funding imposed deadlines, deepening their relationship with the building owner, and ended the year stronger than they started.



## DETROIT PEOPLE'S FOOD CO-OP

*Detroit, MI (pop. 645,000) Stage 5*

Next milestone: Hire new permanent GM, stabilize sales and cash flow

GM turnover at startup food co-ops is the norm rather than the exception. Opening in May 2024, DPFC's opening general manager was in his role for about 15 months before it was time to move on. The board leaned into their national partner, NCG, to support their interim GM, found some additional cash, and are on firm enough footing to search for their next permanent general manager. With over 4400 member-owners, the community is very much behind their store, as evidenced by the many hours volunteers have put in on committees and other efforts to strengthen the co-op.

# UP & COMING

food co-op conference

230+  
attendees

80+  
co-ops from  
44 states

“As a first time attendee, the Up & Coming Conference was eye-opening. The freely shared knowledge & best practices: AMAZING. Every breakout session: EXCELLENT. Black Led Day: WOW. Tour of The People’s Food Coop: INSIGHTFUL. Looking forward to Detroit 2027.”

— Kenneth Elliott  
Board Member, Fertile Ground  
Food Co-op, Raleigh, NC



More than 230 cooperators from across the U.S gathered in Kalamazoo, MI for three days of hands-on workshops led by experts, peer case studies and building a movement together.

For the first time, the conference offered co-creation sessions, where facilitators and conference attendees developed sessions in real-time about the GM crisis, the importance of trust in cooperation and more.

PFC Grocery & Deli, the host co-op for the second year in a row, helped coordinate both its store tours and a local bookstore pop up, which brought a curated selection of books focused on co-op and food justice for attendees to shop right at the conference.

The Up & Coming Conference was co-hosted by the Indiana Cooperative Development Center and Food Co-op Initiative. We were honored to partner with the **National Black Food and Justice Alliance** to host the fifth annual Black-led Day for over 100 Black cooperators.



National Black Food and  
Justice Alliance

## 5th Annual Black-led Day!



# CUTTING EDGE CONVOS

## AT UP & COMING

Up & Coming is not just a place to draw inspiration: It's an in-person gathering to brainstorm solutions to big problems and collectively create the future of food cooperation.

Board members of startups, support providers, consultants and other cooperators packed the room for the General Manager (GM) Crisis co-creation session to discuss the expectations of the role versus the GM's actual capacity. Former and current store GMs addressed the lack of training available as well as a growing need for GMs that isn't being met.

In another session, FCI gathered cooperative funders and food co-op experts to learn from and brainstorm with presenters from Argus Farm Stop, IGA, and Food Club Network. Each organization discussed their paths to helping people get food into their communities despite the challenges of rising construction costs and the closures of farms and grocery stores across the U.S.



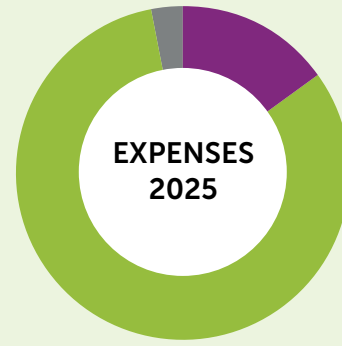
"The sessions are always terrific, but it's the space that keeps us coming back. We start sharing and learning from each other immediately. We stay in contact, we cheer one another on. That's the magic of U&C. Don't ever change."

— 2025 Up & Coming Attendee

# FCI 2025 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT



- Grants **\$397,611**
- Contributions **\$137,011**
- Other **\$1,868**



- Programming **\$454,294**
- Mgmt & General **\$83,829**
- Fundraising **\$16,518**

*Put **your** co-op on our 2026 map with a donation pledge today!*

Here's how you get on our 2026 map:



# DONORS



We are grateful to the **50+ individuals** who donated to FCI in 2025, either as monthly sustaining donors or with an annual contribution. Every gift supports our work immeasurably, thank you!

# Thank you!

TO OUR 2025 FULL CIRCLE CO-OPS

**60**  
co-ops  
donated!

**\$92,813** total  
raised

**\$1,547** average  
donation



## Dill Pickle Food Co-op

"FCI has been foundational in uplifting the next generation of cooperators and supporting those dedicated to keeping the cooperative model alive. Their resources, education, and expertise provide vital support to both emerging startups and long-established co-ops. We are extremely proud to support FCI."

*I'Talia McCarthy, General Manager*



## BriarPatch Co-op

"We all know that food co-ops play a critically important role in a resilient and equitable food system. It is our responsibility to support that by giving of all our resources — from time and expertise to financial support. BriarPatch once relied on the support of co-ops around the country and is proud to pay that forward by supporting the FCI Full Circle campaign."

*Chris Maher, General Manager*



## Assabet Co-op Market

"FCI was an indispensable and steadfast partner to Assabet Co-op Market; they helped us grow from a hopeful idea into a thriving store. I encourage everyone who believes in cooperative growth to support FCI, so they can empower the next generation of co-ops."

*Sam McCormick, General Manager*



## FOOD CO-OP INITIATIVE

New co-ops start here.

2801 Hennepin Ave. South  
PMB 208  
Minneapolis, MN 55408

844-324-2667

[www.FCI.coop](http://www.FCI.coop)

**“When I think of FCI, I think of the very best guidance and instruction of any agency that I’ve worked with.”**



“It’s impossible to get this guidance for free anywhere else. I applaud FCI’s ability to provide resources that are timely, useful, highly ethical and meets the needs of our communities.”

— Janet Howard  
Fertile Ground  
Food Co-op  
Raleigh, NC

FCI's  
**FULL CIRCLE**  
campaign kicks off in JUNE

*Those funds allow us to help more startups like Fertile Ground!*