

## Continuation on Cooperative Discussion – August 23, 2014

Proposed topics:

- Nuts and bolts of a worker coop
- Establishing a new housing coop

USA Cooperative Youth Council in September 26-28

COminnesota.coop

Break-out: Worker co-ops

- Resources from people who have already started the process
  - Cooperation Works – coop development stuff
  - Traveling Cooperative Institute (Emily)
  - Democracy at Work Network/Institute
  - North Country Cooperative Development Fund (NCDF)
  - Working World
  - Social Reinvestment Fund – want to fund larger projects (more than \$300,000)
  - Locally Collie Bradick helps people start coops – especially ag related
  - Cenex Harvest States (CHS) – largest coop in the country, have grants for cooperative education
  - Ralph K. Morris Foundation – Money to send young people to coop education
  - Cooperation Works has several toolboxes. Just google “worker cooperative toolbox”. It is a good foundation.
  - Coopoly game
  - Be a part of networks of people that are part of coops! Talk to real people.
- Ruby: There are so many people who want to help coops, but a huge resource is people who work at worker coops. Don't start a coop just to start a coop.
- Ruby: Coops are a long-haul strategy. If you want to travel and end up in a different city, it can be hard to start a coop. It is almost like buying a house. It is putting roots down.
- Ben: You do need people who are dedicated to the business. There are a lot of ways to structure it where you can have younger owner members but also have some consistency/steering from people who are in it for the long haul.
- Peter: Our current group ranges from 16-27. We expect during the growing season we will have more work. We want room for members who are only working seasonally.
- Ben: Isthmus Engineering in Madison, WI. All members vote and hire a general manager who is not a member. The manager can be hired/fired by the members. This may provide consistency.
- Cliff: Right now our group is youth. How do we have high school students who do a little work participate in decision-making but still have a few core

- members who do a lot of the work. Does everyone have the same decision-making power?
- Peter: If our coop decides that our share of profit is based on hours worked then it isn't super important how much people work. There will also be some paid employees who are not members and just work seasonally.
  - Ben: Are you planning to hold some of the profit or allocate it all?
  - Peter: We haven't made a decision yet. We plan to put money into an internal account to plan for expansion.
  - Cliff: Have you worked with the North Country Development Fund?
  - Ben: Yes, they are more helpful than a regular bank. Part of our mission is to create jobs so we focus somewhat in expansion. We have some seasonal employees. Each department has its own decision-making so all employees participate in that.
  - How much time put into education of workers?
  - Ben: Two levels of education. Sometimes just 15 minutes at a meeting for education which is ongoing. Sometimes we have dedicated meetings for trainings in the off season.

Reaching out about coops:

- Chicago is doing dinners to build knowledge and community about coops
- Study groups as a tactic for building knowledge

Action steps:

- Research
- Trade information and call each other in the future!