



[COOPERATIVE STARTUPS & EDUCATION](#)

[CO-OP LOCAL FOODS](#)

[COOPERATIVE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT](#)

[COOPERATIVE CAPITALIZATION](#)

Startups: CDS was founded in 1985 to provide trusted guidance to groups starting new co-ops. Today we do that work primarily in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa.

The [cooperative](#) form of business is a unique model that focuses on delivering needed services used by its owner-members, not on generating profits for investor-owners. This focus on service over profit changes the fundamental motivations of the cooperative business, and is why this model has been extensively used all over the world to help groups of people obtain outcomes that they could not achieve individually, and to do so in a fair and equitable way. It is the only major business model that is associated with a set of internationally recognized [principles and values](#). Properly understood, these principles provide key insights about how to powerfully and sustainably use the cooperative business model.

Because of this fundamental difference in business focus, there can be confusion about how a group can best go about the process of starting a co-op. A core competency for CDS is our ability to help a group see the various stages involved in cooperative development, and to organize their work so that they can use best practices to avoid unnecessary challenges and detours.

Take a look at our [Co-op 101 tutorial](#) (PDF) that describes how a group of cooperators can build both a democratic association of owner-members and a successful business. [Contact us](#) to talk about your specific project.

Education: We provide our startup education programs in a couple of different ways.

- **Early stage small groups:** We can work remotely or in person to advise a group on doing their own background reading, conducting pre-feasibility research, and forming a steering committee to lead their startup efforts.
- **Understanding the startup process:** Once a steering committee is formed, we will provide guidance on the development pathway as shown in our Co-op 101 tutorial. We find that once the steering committee sees their pathway, they are able to form working committees and begin raising money to support their business development efforts.
- **Classes on co-op startups:** CDS periodically delivers classes on co-op development where the audience is made up of people from multiple startups. One such course is available through the

foundation resources. Let us know how we can help.

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Cooperative Development Services
Where cooperation is at work, communities prosper.



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