



# **We Run This: Peer to Peer Internal & External Education Mechanisms**

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**Association of Co-operative Educators  
Annual Institute, UMASS Amherst**

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## What we'd like to discuss today...

- Introductions
- Challenges and Successes of Peer to Peer Education
- Secondary co-operatives: Examples, Advantages, Inspiration
- Academy and Co-operatives: Effective Partners?
- Examples of partnerships: St. Mary's CMEC and UMass CEC
- Your thoughts
- Your questions

# Co-operative Economies

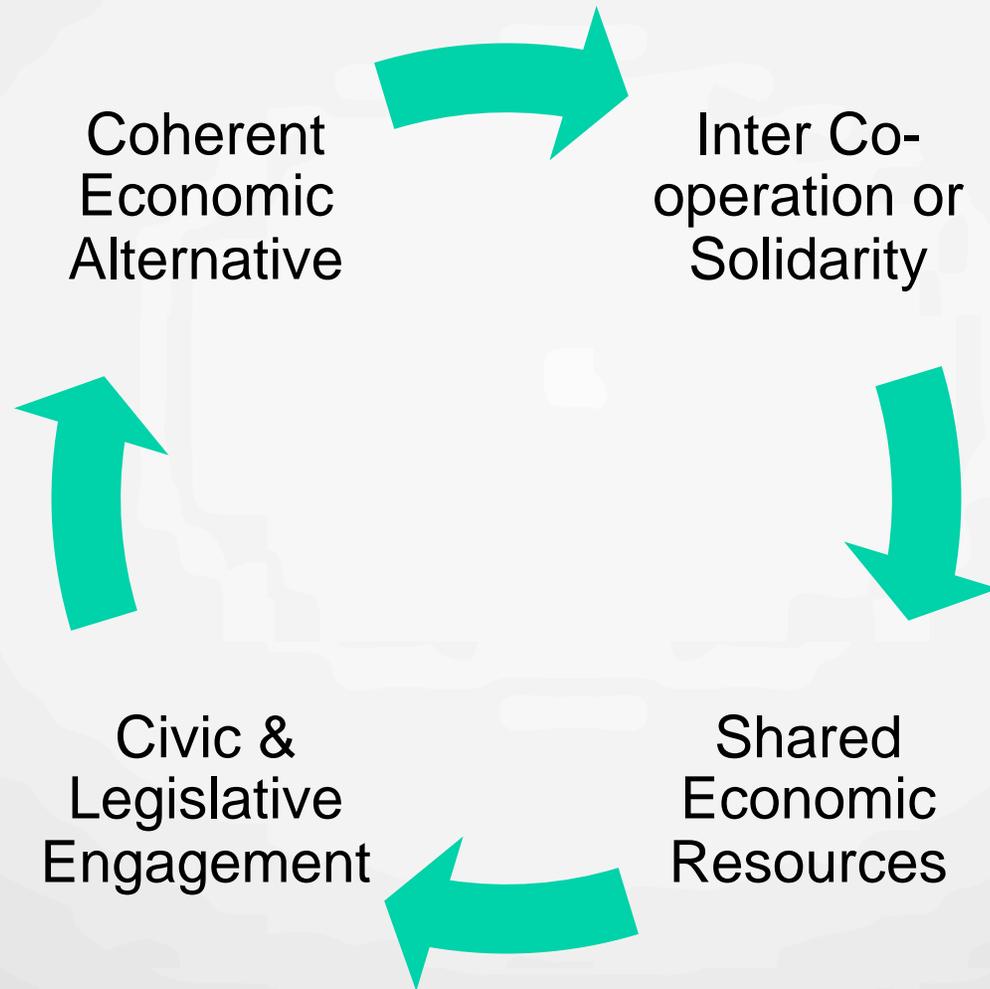
## Mondragón, Spain



## Emilia Romagna, Italy



# What Do Successful Co-operative Complexes Share?



# What to Learn from the Co-op Principles?

## Principle 5: Education, Training & Information

“Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.”



Co-operative enterprises  
build a better world

# What to Learn from the Co-op Principles?

## Principle 6: Co-operation among Co-operatives

- Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
- Co-operative Values: **self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity** and **solidarity**.



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# Peer to Peer Education: Challenges

- Building consensus on objectives
- Scarce resources
- Reaching grassroots membership
- “Someone else will do it for us:” Culture of 'experts'/Expertise in co-operative participation taken for granted
- Democracy/co-op management is a process



# Peer to Peer Education: Successes

- Participation and Expertise formalized
- Create shared voice to clarify goals and process with collaborators
- Address issues larger than one co-op:
  - Legislative engagement,
  - Media relations
  - Co-op development
  - Financing
  - Education
- Co-ops using their own business model to meet their own needs, provide support and grow the movement.



## Secondary Co-ops: Characteristics

- Accountability: Owned, funded and run by co-operatives
- Explicit integration of Co-operative Principles, Values and Identity
- Co-ops elect Board, hire Staff, determine goals, guide operation
- Partners have direct connection to membership, goals, process
- Leverage shared resources for success.



# Secondary Co-op: (Brief) Case Study #1



## Neighboring Food Co-op Association

- Brattleboro Food Co-op (VT) 100 year vision.
- 2004: Dialog among food co-ops in upper Connecticut River valley: Collaborative planning.
- 2007: Middlebury Manifesto: "...further the ideals of democracy, co-operation, autonomy and education as enshrined in the International Co-operative Principles."



# Secondary Co-op: (Brief) Case Study #1



## Neighboring Food Co-op Association

2007: Middlebury Manifesto —

- “Reorient the economy from one dedicated to maximizing individual wealth to one calculated to advance the common good,”
- “Promote regional autonomy in food production and other goods essential to human existence,”
- “Provide occasion for collective action to build a co-operative economy in our geographical region.”

# Secondary Co-op: (Brief) Case Study #1



## Neighboring Food Co-op Association

- Incorporated as co-operative of co-ops, with 35 food co-ops and start-up initiatives in New England
- NFCA have a combined membership of more than 90,000, employ over 1,700 people, have annual revenue of \$255 million (2013), estimated \$50 million in local purchases.
- VT members taken together would be among top 25 employers in state
- Priorities of peer networking, marketing and education, regional sourcing.

# Secondary Co-op: (Brief) Case Study #1



## Neighboring Food Co-op Association

### Vision

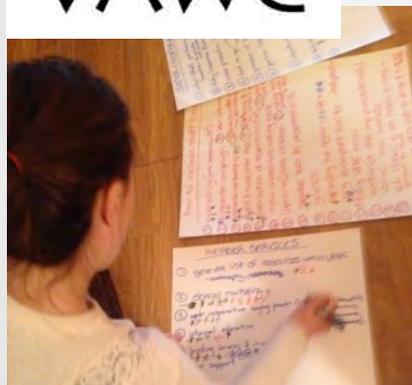
- “A thriving co-operative economy, rooted in a healthy, just and sustainable food system and a vibrant community of co-operative enterprise.”

## Secondary Co-op (Brief) Case Study #2



### Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives

- Started in 2005 to continue energy and development of Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy
- Spent 3 years building relationships and trust
- Part of a new generation of interco-operative leaders
- Pose interco-operation as necessary to answer these larger questions
- Incorporated as a co-op itself in 2010
- Vision is of a rich co-operative economy based in cross sector co-op collaboration



# Secondary Co-op (Brief) Case Study #2

- 70+ worker members
- \$7.3 million revenue (2014)
- \$38K in charitable donations
- \$35K+ in interco-operative purchases
- Linked to/founded from social justice and/or environmental movements
- VAWC incorporated as a co-operative, owned and controlled by Members
- Supported six conversions
- Runs/owns VAWC Interco-operative Loan Fund
- Co founded VCBA, UMassCEC



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# All sectors: Valley Co-operative Business Association

Legislative Engagement  
 Mayoral/City Council Proclamation

Concerning the Proclamation of the International Year of Co-operatives:  
 WHEREAS, Cooperative organizations help build and sustain healthy communities in {enter name of state or city}; promote jobs and enhance the quality of life for those in our state, throughout the country and the world; and

Holding Events



Articles on co-op development in co-op newsletters and movement media



Shared Advertising

**CO-OPS BUILD A BETTER WORLD!**

October is Co-op Month! Across the Pioneer Valley and around the world, your local co-ops & credit unions help you connect with your community. Co-ops put people before profits, contributing to community development, employment and food security. Stop in at your local co-op or credit union to see what the buzz is all about. Want to know more about co-ops in the Pioneer Valley and what they can do for you? Visit [www.vcba.coop](http://www.vcba.coop).

**The Co-OP CONNECTION**

vcba  
 www.vcba.coop

NCBA  
 www.ncba.org

# Peer to Peer Education: Internal

**VAWC Owners' Manual** – System wide educational tool for new members/co-ops – co-op history, governance, participation, etc.

- Intern research projects build knowledge specific to challenges of VAWC system and surrounding co-ops
- VAWC meetings serve as formal venue for skill and resource sharing
- VAWC Membership agreement suggests up to 10% of worker time be dedicated to education within mission.

*We, the members of  
the Valley Alliance*



## Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives Membership Agreement

Version 1.0, Approved 4/28/10

### Preamble

The Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives (VAWC) is rooted in the ideals of co-operation, mutuality and solidarity. VAWC is itself an expression of co-operative principles — a “co-op of co-ops” that have come together as a means of strengthening the efforts of our individual co-ops to develop their businesses, serve their members, and contribute to the wider co-operative economy. Our core goal is to provide ourselves with the resources and support we need to advance our co-operatives, empower our members, and benefit more people in our communities. In joining with VAWC, our co-ops commit to solidarity as expressed by the following provisions of membership.

### Vision

We envision a co-operative economy where we can live as citizens, co-operating with an economy built



# Peer to Peer Education: Example

- Member gatherings: Cross sector dialog, “topic tables,” movement engagement.
- Healthy Food Access, making healthy food and co-op membership more accessible.
- Peer Networking for professional development Marketing & Membership.
- Collaborations with Farmers Union on Community Curricula.



## Peer to Peer Education: External to Public

- Together, We're **Working** for a Co-operative Economy marketing campaign exclusively in four co-op newsletters
- Draw focus to the co-operative system of co-operative offerings
- Share customers
- Engage members and public in filling gaps in economy with co-ops



*Working*  
for a Co-operative Economy

**Go Solar! Go Co-op!**  
Pioneer Valley PhotoVoltaics is worker-owned & committed to community, so we design all our systems to last. Learn more about PV Squared and other members of the Valley Alliance of Worker Co-ops on our website.

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# Academy & Co-operatives: Partners?

How can co-ops create modules and curriculum in the academy and conferences?

How can the academy and the co-operative movement build effective partnerships for educating about the co-operative movement?

There are more members of co-operatives than there are shareholders in private corporations. Why are co-ops generally overlooked as an economic model?

Do we believe in the systems being taught? Are we satisfied?



## One Collaborative Model: CMEC

- Co-operative Management Education Co-operative (CMEC) formed to develop graduate level management education for co-op professionals.
- **Multistakeholder co-operative of co-operatives, co-operative associations, educational institutions, academics and students.**
- Agreement with Saint Mary's University defines collaboration in development of Co-operative Management Education (CME) program, including Master of Management: Co-operatives & Credit Unions and Certificate Program.
- Co-op Principles & Values embedded throughout curriculum, designed for active co-op professionals.
- Online platform supports cross sector, international collaboration among co-operative practitioners.

# Co-op/Academy Examples: UMass CEC

- **UMass Co-operative Enterprise Collaborative**  
– Faculty, Students, Administrators and Co-operative Associations meet together.
- UMCEC writes curriculum, builds relationships between Economics Department and the co-operative movement in western MA
- **Certificate in Co-operative Enterprise** – internship program with VAWC and NFCA Member Co-ops; research and labor goals co-created by students, Introductory and upper level classes with 200+ students a year.
- Supports seven student run co-ops on campus.



# Academy & Co-ops: Discussion for Partnerships

**The Challenge:** Harnessing the research and institutional resources to support and understand co-operative economics and mutual benefit.

**A Foundation:** Co-operatives, Faculty and Students work together on basis of equality

**Potentialities:** Secondary Education as connected to co-operative economy as capitalist and non-profit economies.

Co-operatives dedicate resources and relationships to educational systems.

Faculty and students opened up – or further supported – to engage the co-operative sector.

***A democratic economy we all can live in, work in and believe in.***



# Summary

Secondary co-ops provide accountable infrastructure for long-term member education, engagement and empowerment

Peer networking is an extension of co-op commitment to education, empowering members and building skills, sharing resources.

Secondary co-ops can be an effective long term partners for the academy in building curriculum, course content, internships.



International  
Co-operative  
Alliance

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UMASS  
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# Resources

Neighboring Food Co-op Association

[nfca.coop](http://nfca.coop)

Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives

[valleyworker.coop](http://valleyworker.coop)

Valley Co-operative Business Association

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

International Co-operative Alliance

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

*Building Co-operative Power* – Stories and Strategies

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