



Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives



Annual Report 2024

Greetings Members, Affiliates, Partners and Supporters,

VAWC made strides in strengthening our membership with education, marketing, and engaging government agencies to create and also ease the creation of new co-ops. We continue to support the UMass Certificate in Cooperative Enterprise through coordination of interns, class and visits. Our annual educational event has grown in attendance and impact three years running and VAWC's Fund continues to support members, expand the co-op movement through investment, and to provide leverage for members to participate in co-op finance.

This is a special year for us, too, as the first meeting of co-operators and their supporters that became VAWC was in September, 2005, in the kitchen of a member of Collective Copies. 20 years ago, worker co-ops joined together to form a venue led by co-ops to communicate needs and goals in a trustworthy place dedicated to the emancipation of labor, preservation of the planet's life, and to a just economy. This year, we will envision a future of the next 20 years.

As always, thank you to our member co-operatives for making our work possible. Thanks, too, to our affiliates and partners who allow us to connect our efforts and achieve shared missions.

In Solidarity, the VAWC Board of Directors,

Larisa Demos, *Flat Iron Cooperative*
Ethan Tupelo, *Pedal People Cooperative*
Suzette Snow-Cobb, Stakeholder Director
Neighboring Food Co-op Association
Carl Woodruff, *Oxbow Design Build*

Cover picture: *Pedal People Cooperative*
Left: *Oxbow Design Build*



Education


We hosted yet another intern from the UMass Cooperative Enterprise Collaborative, held our annual educational series, and continued work with our Co-op Lifecycle Framework (CLF). The CLF is a tool made for co-ops that we adjusted to fit worker co-ops specifically. In 2023 we held four sessions to support our members' financial and co-op health and are continuing that effort in 2024.

Influencing Government Agencies

VAWC worked with Secretaries of State to highlight the importance of incorporation and legislation specific to co-ops. We are establishing working relationships with these important parts of state government to highlight and improve access to forming co-ops in our region. Through our members' experiences and support, VAWC is able to provide unique experiences of co-op incorporation to improve awareness of and access to strong legal and governmental standing.

Thanks to our members and to the Cooperative Development Foundation for their support of this work. Learn more about CDF at www.cdf.coop.

Oxbow Design Build Cooperative
Priorities are the environment and housing justice at this full service company




- Consulted from an LLC to incorporated in 2019
- Offers full-on design conceptualization
- Incorporated as a worker co-op under M.G.L. 157A
- Has a 100% employee owned and controlled by its members
- Offers a variety of services including architecture and construction
- Makes sustainable construction options more readily available

Choose ideas/projects from their conceptual stages all the way through execution while prioritizing community and sustainability in each step. From the projects they decide to undertake, the members buy into, and the community analyzes their approach. Oxbow shares its member resources as a worker-owned cooperative. With financial stability, construction experience and local staff resources in Vermont, Oxbow offers a sustainable, demonstrated product.

The Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives (VAWC) is a group of worker co-operatives who come together to support, advance and develop worker co-ops in Vermont and Massachusetts. VAWC is supported through contributions from local and statewide member co-ops. For more information, contact us at info@valawc.org. We provide services to our member co-ops and the public, including the Co-Opedia in Digital format. Co-operation is supported at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Contact: Adam Trott adam@valawc.org | valaworking.org | 1-877-388-1000



Intern Dylan Hatch worked with staff and board to write articles about every VAWC member. Articles were sent to media, legislators, and government agencies.

Cooperation in Vermont is Growing
Flat Iron Coffee Roasters Unites Workers and Consumers, Enhances Community Ownership in Barre, Falls



- Opened in December 2021
- Proposed shared co-ops
- 12 worker members and 17 consumer members
- Hosts regular "Meet & Greet" events and community events
- Work in regular rotation with more responsibility
- Open 7 days a week, 10 food products
- Incorporated as a Flat Iron Coffee Co. Cooperative
- Cooperative owned and fully controlled by its members

The Flat Iron Co-Op is a worker and consumer-owned coffeehouse in Barre, Falls, Vermont, serving local and organic, all while creating coffee and fostering community engagement. Founders (including Larissa, pictured above) worked with local cafe owner and leading voice in Vermont food system leadership. Flat Iron is nearly two years old and their community space serves as a gathering site for local community members to meet, learn, share, discuss, and food, financial and social performance.

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Our Annual Educational Series

A pillar of VAWC's work is to educate ourselves and our members regarding shared resources and best practices of worker co-ops. In dialog during meetings, it was highlighted that many members struggle to find policy language to support their structures and practices. VAWC organized our annual educational series to have members of three worker co-ops share existing policies as best practices. VAWC shared two policies crafted by board and staff and we worked with the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives on a policy of equity in hiring.

Policies to Empower VAWC Supports Member-Centered Operations

Pedal People, Flat Iron, and Oxbow Design Build presented along with the US Federation of Worker Co-ops to provide dialog and six sample policies.

Subject areas included Surplus Distribution, Hiring for Equity, Workplace Safety, Education & more.

Thank you to our members and sponsors for making peer support and this workshop possible.

**POLICIES TO EMPOWER:
BEST POLICY PRACTICES FOR WORKER CO-OPS**

Join worker co-ops as they present policies and practices to empower members and maximize impact.

Worker co-ops will share examples of their policies and VAWC will share proposed policies to fill current gaps.

Topics will include:
Co-op Procurement
Member Support & Benefits
Workplace Safety
Movement Participation
Education
Surplus Distribution

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Thank you to our sponsors:

ncb YPOC Shared Earth Cooperative Cooperatives for the People vcba UNWASHIVE SOBBY COOP COOPERATIVE CURD

Also brought to you by the Northwest Real Co-op Alliance

The Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives
Supporting 50+ Sources of Worker Cooperatives in the Valley and Beyond

Surplus Distribution Policy Proposal

Adam Tost • Executive Director • atost@valleyworker.coop

Background

The overall goal of this proposal is to engage members in dialog and to propose members and the co-op itself to proceed in a minimum. In consideration of the timeframe before the end of the year and the potential of creating a surplus in a co-op it is being proposed in place for surplus and its potential distribution. Surplus and its diverse abilities to support a co-op for the long term are among the most powerful abilities members have in a worker cooperative. When used strategically surplus can be instrumental in retaining members, increasing productivity and innovation, supporting financial positions of the co-op movement, and building a co-op that is intergenerational and

Financial Report

VAWC prioritizes a strong financial position to provide long-term, dependable support for our members. We increased reserves, continued investing our funds in co-ops, and continued to make direct loans to members through our own fund, the Intercooperative Development Fund.

2024 saw yet another successful execution of our member-approved budget, and:

- VAWC's Fund increased to \$31,000
- A direct loan to a VAWC Member Co-op is in good standing in its second year
- Retained reserves of 10 months of our average annual budget
- VAWC has \$45,000 invested in co-ops regionally and nationally

Thanks to our Affiliates

Affiliates are co-ops and individuals that support our mission and success.

Boston Tech Collective
River Valley Co-op
Suzette Snow-Cobb

VAWC Financial Snap Shot

2023-2024 Budget	\$11,900
Reserve Account	\$8,700

Expenses

Staff payroll & taxes	\$7,789
Printing, Phone and Web	\$300
Accounting & Bookkeeping	\$1,200
Marketing	\$1,100
Income Taxes	\$1,200
Memberships & Sponsorships	\$550

Income

Member Dues and Income	\$3,500
Affiliates	\$1,000
Sponsorships	\$2,400
Other Income	\$2,600

Want to Donate to the VAWC Fund?

Be part of meeting growing demand for co-op finance. VAWC accepts donations to our Fund to increase our ability to meet financial need. 100% of funds accepted go to the Fund.

Contact us: adam@valleyworker.coop.

Spreading the Message of Cooperation

We focused on public awareness this past year. We leveraged attention on co-ops during National Co-op Month in October to publish five articles featuring our members. We sponsored educational spots on the radio on WHMP,

WRSI and three other stations to impact more of the public. We worked with the Valley Co-op Business Association on print ads in our region where co-ops of all kinds joined together under a common message.

National Co-op Month's shared print ad by VCBA promoted cross sector collaboration in our region and included VAWC and many VAWC members and affiliates.



VAWC is a proud member of the following co-operatives:



**Shared Capital
Cooperative®**



A member of:



An investor in:



And a Federation Partner of:



Special Thanks to Our Members

Collective Copies*

Flat Iron Cooperative

The Hive Maker Space

Oxbow Design Build Cooperative

Pedal People Cooperative*

** Collective Copies and Pedal People are founding VAWC Members*