

## Structures to Support Coop Education

Means:

different things for different people - youth education, higher ed, etc.

Structures and support as a funder, lots of structures doing this, what to support?

MidAmerica Cooperative Council - 1 regional council. Each council fairly ineffective at providing education and wide variety of ed opportunities. Conduit of what members need and what training is available.

Coordination of structures - not everyone involved with ACE. If knew each niche could be a clearing house? But the information is dynamic, no specifics, the networking is more important.

Linking and networking most effective.

ACE brings people together and seems valuable to those who attend. But financing is difficult - funded through more than registrations? The getting together is important experience. Under selling the value of what we do.

Needs:

State and regional councils need an opportunity to get together. Need leadership.

NICE summer education program gone now, after 75 years, for ag coops. A lot of reasons why it could not continue: lack of leadership, changes, costs, etc. Only a small group meeting in Virginia left. CEOs became aware of cooperative ed needs. Need a new plan and strategy.

Bridge with other parts of the country.

Connect with programs that are effective and exciting, especially outside traditional ag coop education.

What does it mean to be a coop educator, broad discipline.

We have communities that are ripe for coop development, but don't have anyone to organize them. How do you engage new communities? Being a community organizer and a coop educator. Is it organizing people and educating them or developing cooperatives? Organizing rather than helping others to help themselves. In New Hampshire the cooperative loan fund helps coop development/organizing. Start with a question and time commitment. Sustainability depends on ability to do education, after the founders, need education to sustain and bring in people on the margins.

Stages of education, organizing and development: orient people to new paradigms and new thinking to get them organized to address issues, and learn about alternative economics and

alternative structures. Then more tailored training after beginning organizing and orientation to develop cooperatives if that is what is needed or wanted.

May have the wrong structures to get into this. Make development centers but that may not be the best starting place - forces the issue about only a coop structure. Do we really address what people need. Create a context to talk through choices and find an approach that is right for them.

Cooperative educators versus cooperative communicators? Communicating but not educating? How education differs from communication - government affairs issues, communication? If we did really good education would we need communications? If combine them now might end up with a mishmash. Sometimes the differences are because “communicators” and “educators” reside in different disciplines - communicator in one area, educator another and even trainer in another.

Cooperative development - a profession? Should it be development or more organizing? Need to start with education.

Development project in Minneapolis, Elderly want senior coops because had a voice and were involved. Some communities have no voice or advocate.

What need as a cooperative educator? Best practices, models for educating and organizing communities at the first stages, materials. Help expedite the process.

Spain: an office where you can sit down with an advisor depending on sector and geography who can give you information about laws and opportunities, etc.

There is not a concise place to go to get coop ed information. Finding the program. Even though there are many organizations around. Huge learning curve from management side. Pieces are scattered around and reside informally in different individuals.

Process to help new ACE members, get to know each other? ACE sees itself as a professional organization. What is a new model for the future? We are cooperative educators and other things too.

Getting the coop message out to a variety of audiences or communities. African American and Hmong communities don't always see the existing coops as relevant. Need to be able to connect to different groups with slightly different information or messages about coops, slightly different information catered to the audience - urban coops, people of color experiences with coops, etc..

Difficult to do coop education because have to start with the current system. Gets complicated. See themselves making a choice in a global system. At research level understand the business and the context, but even with groups we work with in Canada, coop businesses have trouble because members or employees don't even know what a coop is. Resources - knowing where the knowledge is, is difficult. More complex for cooperatives, need info in economic, women, etc. Difficult in business, but even more when specialized. Not everyone communicates with each other.

Educate about choice first and then move into cooperatives? Rural working on the land, not much choice, need the coop. In urban situation, they have choice. Can help people understand that they way of consuming and operating is a choice, see profitability and sustainability differently. A way to sustain the economy in the long run. Different than U.S. approach which is self sufficiency about how to make a living.

Role for educators: keep the rest of the system on its toes. Keep reinforcing cooperative focus in internal coop education. Look out for what is going on behind the scenes.

Research support, show how the good practices and what we know or think we know works or its importance. Need more research to support coop ed and need more communication between coop research and coop education.

Structures, fewer and fewer opportunities for senior managers and board members to get together. So people do not have the opportunities to have discussions, mull things over, exchange ideas, etc.

Model from NRC training for top 40 CDC directors - distill meaningful information. Used Harvard effectively. Different model for executive education.

How people first learn about coops is not through a course or class first. We learn through parents or friends, credit union, shop a one or use their services. food buying club. Friends in a coop, worked in a coop. This shows need for a coop educator, use teachable moments with consumers and customers to explain coop more and gain more members.