

# Building a Resilient Worker Cooperative Ecosystem in Madison, Wisconsin

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# 2023 ECOSYSTEM SNAPSHOT



19

co-ops in operation

5

co-ops opening soon

Madison Cooperative Development Coalition  
MadWorC  
Worker Justice Wisconsin

Orgs doing worker co-op development

UW Center for Cooperatives

Madison Public Library

Support organizations

9 new co-ops  
5 conversions

less than 5 years old operating & coming soon

\$180,000 to co-ops

\$324,930 to 8 community based organizations

Grants to co-ops and local orgs (last 5 years)

From a January 2023 survey with 15 respondents

4 started in the last 5 years  
3 are 10-15 years old  
3 are over 40 years old

age of co-ops \*

MCDC - 5  
MadWorC - 5  
UWCC - 6

start-up help \*

328 members  
192 non-member jobs

members & non-member employees \*

\$46,227,112.44

Gross Revenue (2021) \*

\$10,730,503.00

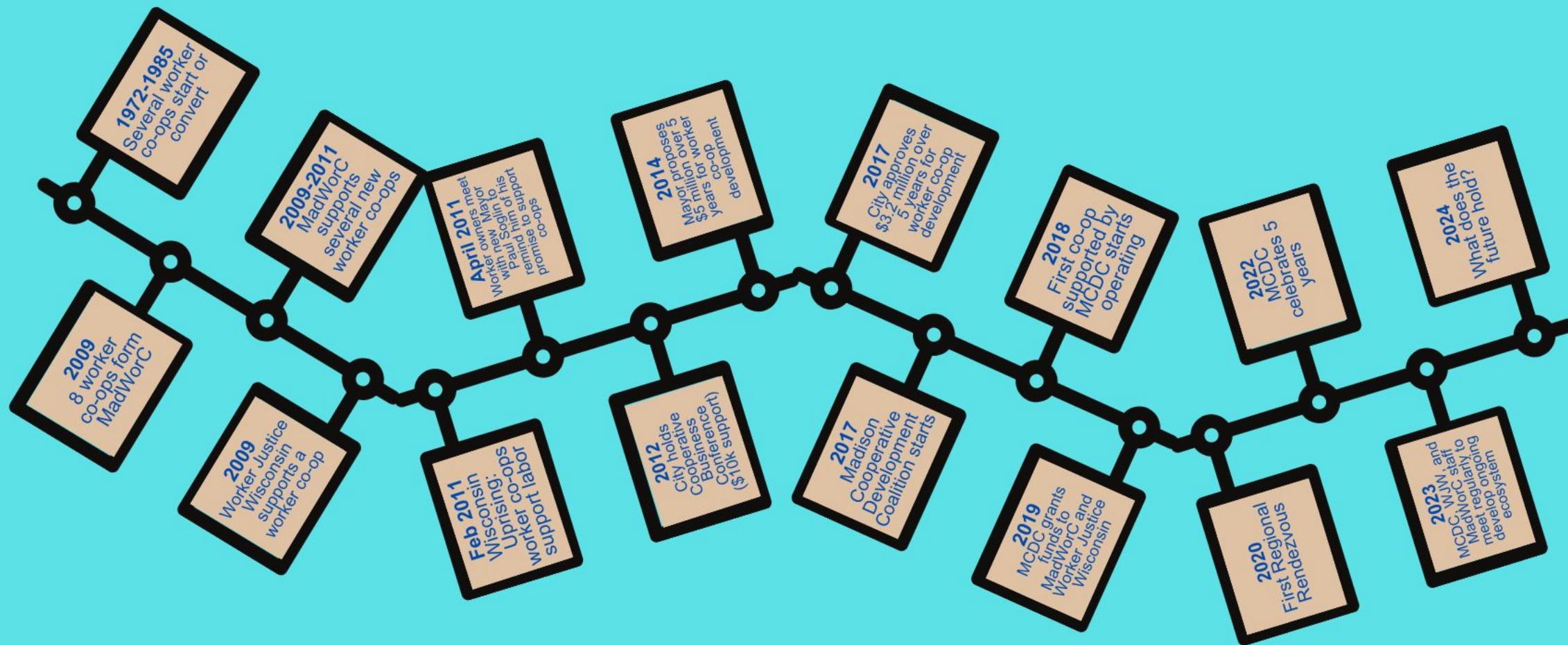
Total Wages (2021) \*

\$40/hour average wage (City is \$28)

Hourly Wages (2021) \*



# MADISON WORKER CO-OP ECOSYSTEM TIMELINE



# Madison Cooperative Development Coalition

**Program Mission:** *MCDC is the City of Madison's funded initiative to form worker cooperatives that address income inequality and racial disparities by creating living-wage and sustainable jobs.*

## Key coalition members:

- Co-op developers
- Office of Business Resources
- Community based organizations

## Key program areas:

- Technical assistance and education
- Loan funds
- Start ups and conversions





# Worker Cooperatives in Madison (Pre-MCDC)



# Worker Cooperatives in Madison (Since MCDC)



tone



# Education

- Co-op 101s and 201s (often with Spanish interpretation)
- Tailored for organizations/nonprofits
- Local and national media
- UW Center for Cooperatives board governance trainings
- Conversations!

# Preferred Providers Network

- University of Wisconsin Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic
- Attorneys and Small Axe Co-op
- Common Good Bookkeeping Co-op and Wegner CPAs
- Shared Capital Co-op and Kiva
- Wisconsin Womens' Business Initiative Corporation, Gener8tor, and other business supports and accelerators



# Grants

- Up to \$10,000 for co-ops in development of conversions
- Amount to community organizations have shifted over time
- In 2023, we awarded \$69,930 in total to MadWorC and Worker Justice Wisconsin
- Engaged with Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's Feasibility Study Grant Program

# MadWorC: Overview

- Formed in 2009 by 8 worker cooperatives
- Incorporated as a co-op (of co-ops) in 2012
- Purpose is to support worker cooperatives through peer networking & education, and address racial, economic & gender justice.





# MadWorC: Brief History

- Pushed for 2012 Co-op Business Conference hosted by City
- Advocated for City funding for worker co-op development
- MadWorC members on MCDC board
- Strategic Plan for 2021-2024



Clockwise:  
Tabling in 2011 supporting labor; tabling unknown, and a founder of MadWorC at the Cooperative Business Conference.



# MadWorC: Key Activities

Peer Networking: Support between worker owners has always been part of MadWorC's focus



Left:  
Participants in  
an Open  
Space session  
at the 2023  
Regional  
Rendezvous

Right: Small  
groups  
connecting  
during Coffee  
Hour at the  
2023 Regional  
Rendezvous





# MadWorC: Key Activities

Worker Co-op Socials:  
MadWorC started as informal  
social gatherings.

Strong relationships build  
strong engagement.



July 2021 Worker Co-op Social

# MadWorC: Key Activities



Collective Courage Book  
Club  
Spring 2021

Emergent Strategy Book  
Club Flyer

Book Club: started in 2021 to read Collective Courage.

Learning together: builds community, opportunity to  
connect in a structured non-business way.





# MadWorC: Key Activities

Regional Rendezvous: a conference focused on the needs of worker owners, prioritizing sessions by worker owners and for worker owners, and with a goal of building regional connections.



2023 Regional  
Rendezvous

Left: group  
photo

Right:  
workshop  
session





# MadWorC: Key Activities

## Class for Trade School Students:

- Grant from CDF supported curriculum development
- First 8-week session in 2023
- MadWorC will be publishing the curriculum for anyone to use



Brochure for Start a Worker Co-op Class



### THE CLASS

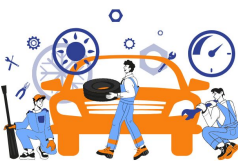
Worker cooperatives are businesses owned and operated democratically by their workers. Worker cooperatives are stable, create well-paying jobs, and keep business in the community. This course will walk you through why and how to create a worker cooperative. We'll cover democratic decision-making, creating bylaws and policies, incorporation, financing, and business planning. Students will work in small groups to create the documents necessary to launch their own business or convert an existing business to a worker cooperative.

- 1. Interactive**  
This class will be interactive and engaging. Homework includes listening to podcasts, watching videos, and reading short articles, as well as visiting local worker cooperatives.
- 2. Real Plans**  
Take the class alone...or with others who are interested in a similar business!
- 3. Small Groups**  
In small groups, you will create a potential co-op business and create bylaws, decision-making processes, and a business plan. You'll leave ready to incorporate, if you decide to make this business a reality.

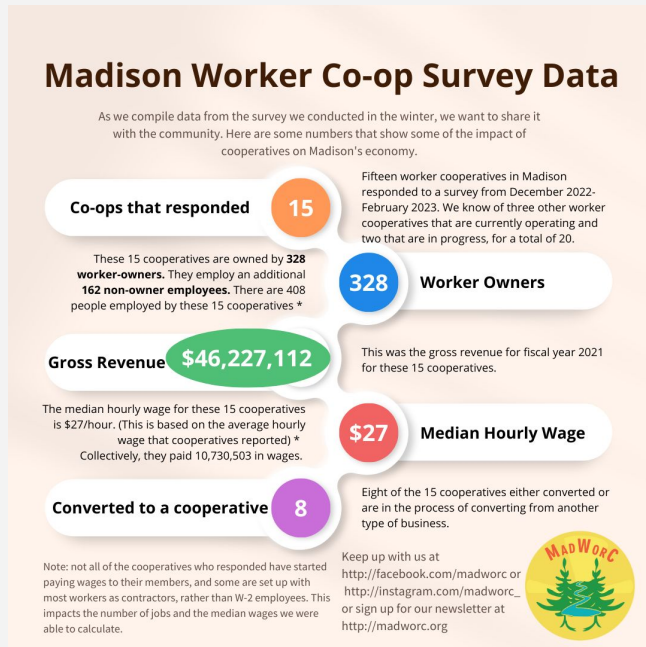


### Business Plan

For the practical component of the class where you work in small groups to create the plans for a new business, we encourage you to work with others in your trade or industry, or to bring some of your co-workers who would like to become business owners. But if you don't have a business team yet, that's fine. We'll match you with other students in the class and you will have the opportunity to figure out what kind of business you could open together.



# MadWorC: Recent Highlights



Graphic of some early data from the Worker Co-op Survey



**Why Shop Co-op?**

When you shop at a worker cooperative, your money stays in the community (because that's where the workers, who own the business, live). You also support businesses that, in general, pay higher wages than non-cooperative businesses. Worker cooperatives promote democracy through worker control.

 indicates MadWorC members in 2023

<b>Common Good Bookkeeping Cooperative</b> Common Good Bookkeeping is a bookkeeping cooperative. They provide financial services to co-ops and others. Their website is <a href="http://cgb.coop">cgb.coop</a> .	<b>Nature's Bakery</b> Nature's Bakery makes veggie burgers and granola. Visit their website at <a href="http://naturesbakery.coop">naturesbakery.coop</a> for a list of local vendors.
<b>Community Pharmacy</b> Community Pharmacy is a health and wellness shop with two locations, including a full service pharmacy on the east side. Locations and hours are at <a href="http://communitypharmacy.coop">communitypharmacy.coop</a> .	<b>nINA Collective</b> nINA Collective does organizational change consulting. Their website is <a href="http://ninacollective.com">ninacollective.com</a> .
<b>Get It Right Educators Cooperative</b> Get It Right Educators Cooperative is a group of educators currently staffing Milestone Democratic School in Madison. Their website is <a href="http://getitrighteducators.coop">getitrighteducators.coop</a> .	<b>PermacultureWorks</b> Permaculture education, website soon.
<b>Just Coffee</b> Just Coffee is a coffee roaster specializing in fair trade and organic coffee. You can find their products in local stores at <a href="http://justcoffee.coop">justcoffee.coop</a> .	<b>Roots4Change</b> Roots4Change is a group of doula and health workers offering community wellness services. Their website is <a href="http://roots4change.coop">roots4change.coop</a> .
<b>Interpreters Cooperative of Madison</b> The Interpreters Cooperative of Madison provides interpretation and written translation in a wide variety of languages. You can request services at <a href="http://interpreters.coop">interpreters.coop</a> .	<b>Tone Madison</b> Tone Madison is a local journalism website at <a href="http://tonemadison.com">tonemadison.com</a> .
<b>Isthmus Engineering and Manufacturing</b> Isthmus is an engineering cooperative located in Madison. You can check out their work at <a href="http://isthmuseng.com">isthmuseng.com</a> .	<b>Underground Self Defense</b> Underground Self Defense teaches martial arts classes and self defense workshops on State Street. Their class schedule is at <a href="http://undergroundselfdefense.coop">undergroundselfdefense.coop</a> .
<b>Madison CycleWorks</b> Madison CycleWorks provides bike delivery services as well as mobile bike repair. Request services at <a href="http://madisoncycletworks.com">madisoncycletworks.com</a> .	<b>Union Cab Cooperative of Madison</b> Union Cab operates a fleet of yellow cabs, including wheelchair accessible vans. Book on their website at <a href="http://unioncab.coop">unioncab.coop</a> , by phone at 608-242-2000, or use their mobile phone app.
<b>Madison MAN Co-op</b> Madison MAN's purpose is to create means for everyone to discover and succeed in work they want to do. <a href="http://madisonman.coop/">madisonman.coop/</a>	<b>Union Technology Cooperative</b> Union Technology Cooperative provides computer systems management and protection services. Contact them via their website at <a href="http://unioontech.coop">unioontech.coop</a> .
<b>Madison Area Cooperative Housing Alliance</b> Will provide co-op specific services available to all of the housing co-ops in the Madison area. <a href="http://machacoop.org">machacoop.org</a>	<b>Wisconsin Natural Heritage Cooperative</b> Wisconsin Natural Heritage Cooperative is a conservation group that contracts with the WI Department of Natural Resources. They don't have a website or public contact information.

don't see your co-op on the list? let us know!  
[madworc@gmail.com](mailto:madworc@gmail.com)

Shop Co-op List from May 2023:  
already some co-ops have closed  
and others have opened.

- Conducted survey of worker co-ops: first data about worker co-ops in Madison in many years
- Working to promote worker co-ops through things like a Shop Co-op list.

# MadWorC: Connect with us

Website: [madworc.org](http://madworc.org)

Facebook: [facebook.com/madworc](https://facebook.com/madworc)

Instagram: [instagram.com/madworc\\_](https://instagram.com/madworc_)

Sign up for monthly newsletter on our website.

If you are passing through Madison, let us know and we can help you connect with local co-ops.





# Worker Justice Wisconsin

**Worker Justice Wisconsin is an interfaith worker center in Madison, Wisconsin.**

We work with:

- Labor unions
- Faith organizations
- Community centers

We bridge the gap of faith and labor, with the goal of creating an educated and empowered working class.

What does faith have to do with labor?

**People look to their faith for guidance in times of crisis - workers want to know that their faith supports their efforts.**





# Who do we serve?

**We largely serve non-union, Spanish-speaking immigrant Latine workers.**

Of the workers that opened cases in 2022:

The issues that they faced were:

52% were female, 46% were male, and 2% were non-binary/other

Over 95% were BIPOC: 91% were Latinx, and 5% were African or African American

88% said their preferred language was Spanish

Wage & Hour – 42%

Discrimination – 13%

Collective Organizing/NLRB – 13%

Safety & Health/Workers Comp – 11%

Unemployment – 2%

Other – 19%

Many of the category “other” were workers fired for legal reasons, and victims of labor trafficking

**In 2022, WJW helped recover a total of \$121,560 in previously owed but unpaid wages**

# What do we do?

## Education

- Educate workers on their rights – discrimination, worker's compensation, wage theft.
- Educate community members on labor issues through Labor in the Pulpits/on the Bimah/in the Minbar.
- Leadership building through our Executive Committee to mobilize workers

## Organizing

- Organize workers in the most problematic industries for immigrant workers:
- Service industries
- Construction
- Food service & production
- Union Partners & SCFL (South Central Federation of Labor of Wisconsin)

## Cooperatives

- Educate the public on worker cooperatives
- Offer in-depth trainings & referrals
- Incubate up to 2 cooperatives per year in the 4 main problematic industries.
- Focus on problematic industries, some of which are not covered by the NLRA
- **Cleaning, Landscaping, Construction, Food service**

# How can Cooperatives meet the needs of our worker base?

## Democracy

- Workers get to exercise their rights as workers and humans
- Workers become more politically conscious and more active in the labor movement

## Immigration

- Undocumented folks can legally be business owners in the U.S. – but not employees
- Workers are often persuaded to start LLCs in order to win bids

## Faith Support

- Cooperatives are supported through Catholic Social Teaching and Liberation Theology





# Gaps and mitigating strategies in co-op development

## Gaps

1. Linguistic Accessibility
2. Educational Accessibility
3. Cultural & Economic Accessibility

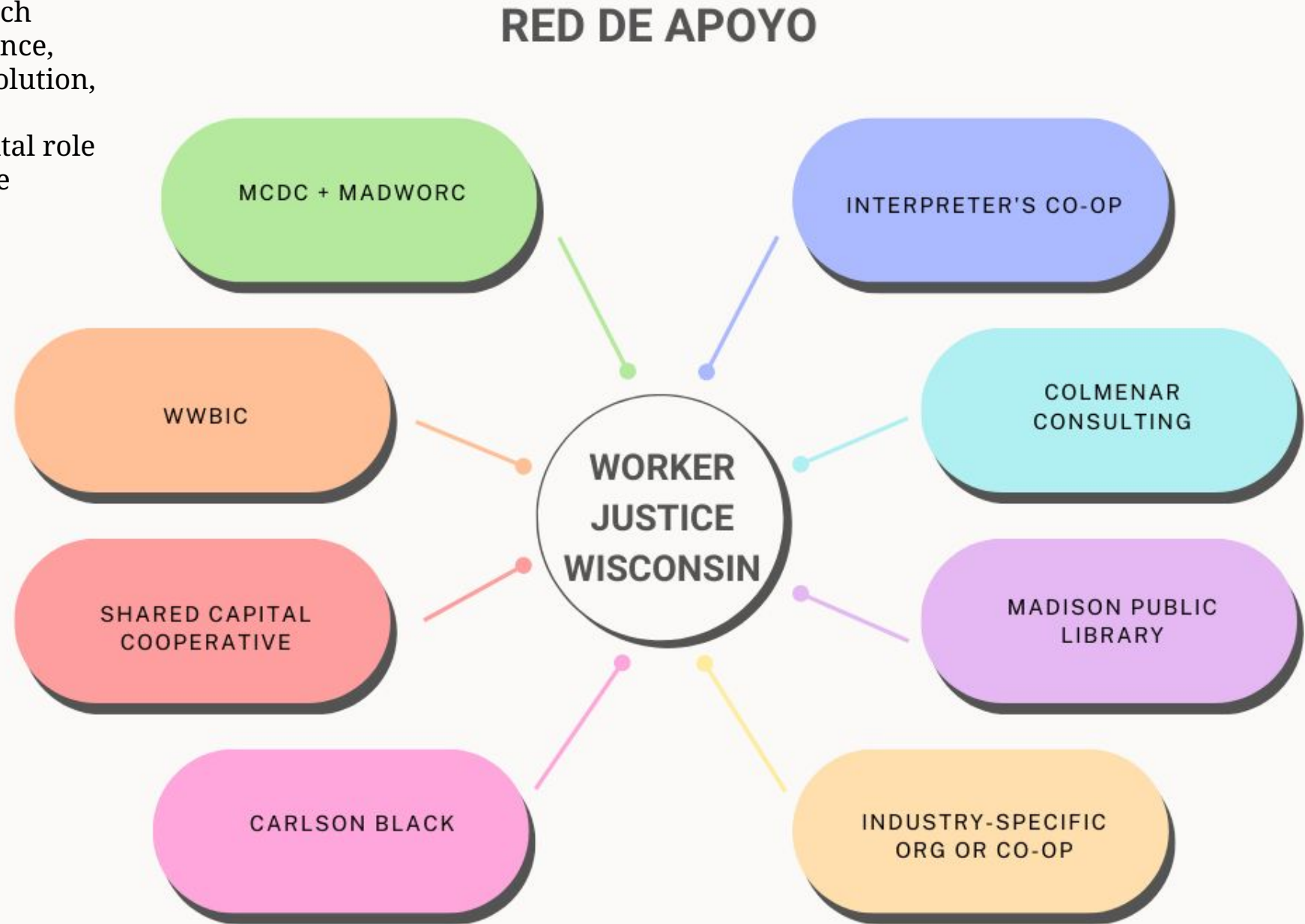
## Strategies

1. Provide workshops and trainings in Spanish - serve as interpreter and translator as needed, hire Interpreter's Co-op.
2. Provide materials in accessible language
3. Hands-on support - incubation instead of referrals





We partner with a number of organizations that each specialize in governance, finances, conflict resolution, etc. Each of these organizations fill a vital role in the longevity of the businesses.





**MARTIN ALVARADO**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LIBRARIAN  
BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY

[malvarado@madisonpubliclibrary.org](mailto:malvarado@madisonpubliclibrary.org)

COOPERATIVE COLLECTION  
BUSINESS RESEARCH DATABASES  
SAMPLE BUSINESS PLANS  
ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATIONS

## Worker Cooperatives, Economy and Community

**Companies We Keep : Employee Ownership and the Business of Community and Place**  
by John Abrams, 338.769080974494 Ab83c2

**Democratic by Design : How Carsharing, Co-ops, and Community Land Trusts are Reinventing America**  
by Gabriel Metcalf, 334.0973 M565d

**Building Co-operative Power : Stories and Strategies From the Worker-cooperatives in the Connecticut River Valley**  
by Janelle Cornwell, Michael Johnson (Grassroots economist), Adam Trott, Julie Graham, 334.60973 B868b

**The Cooperative Solution : How the United States Can Tame Recessions, Reduce Inequality, and Protect the Environment**  
by E. G. Nadeau, 306.3440973 N123c

**Wired Differently : How to Spark Better Results With a Cooperative Business Model, Servant Leadership and Shared Values**  
by Vern Dosch, Wally Goulet, Tracy Finneman, 658.4092 D74w



## Co-op Resources

at [Madison Public Library](#)  
available for order through [LinkCat](#) to  
pick up at any library in the South Central  
Library System

### Wisconsin Cooperatives and How-to

**Cooperatives : Principles and Practices in the 21st century**  
by Kimberly Zeuli, Robert A. Cropp, University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, 334.0973 Z58c 2004

**Collecting Ourselves : A Cooperative Entrepreneurship Curriculum**  
by Emily M. Cheney, Lippold Northcountry Cooperative Foundation 334.68 C685c

**Exploring Cooperatives : Economic Democracy and Community Development in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin**  
by Craig Thomas Borowiak, Richardson Dilworth, Anne Reynolds, University of Wisconsin--Extension Cooperative Extension Service 334.0973 B645e

### History of Cooperatives In The United States

**Collective Courage : A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice**  
by Jessica Gordon Nembhard, 330.9008996073 G657c

**For All the People : Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America**  
by John Curl, 334.0973 C928f2

**Freedom farmers : agricultural resistance and the black freedom movement**  
by Monica White 305.896073 W584f

### Contemporary Issues in coops

**Jackson rising : the struggle for economic democracy and Black self-determination in Jackson, Mississippi**  
by Kali Akuno and Ajamu Nangwaya, editors 976.251 J132j

**Working democracies : managing inequality in worker cooperatives**  
by Joan Meyers 334.068 M576w



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