

Missoula to Mission Valley and North Regional Dialogue

Participants in discussion:

- Hermina Harold (Trust Montana)
- Margaret DeBona (Western Montana Growers Coop)
- Catie Demets (University of Montana grad student)
- Rosie Goldich (Lake County CDC)
- Jim Sugarek (Western Montana Growers Coop)
- Mudita Hinton (Missoula Community Food Coop)
- Jason Moore (Montana Coop)
- Sam Duncan (Missoula Community Food Coop)
- Gypsy Ray (Lake County CDC)
- Kaia Peterson (NeighborWorks)
- Danielle Maiden (NeighborWorks)
- Karl Sutton (Triple Divide Seed Coop)
- Jan Tusick (Lake County CDC)
- Brianna Ewert (Lake County CDC)

Notes: Rosie Goldich

Facilitated by: Brianna Ewert

Successes: What does your Coop do really well? What has your Coop done that makes you proud?

- Source local food and providing in the market
- Change and adapt
- 2 cooperative development centers
- Partner with other organizations
- Handle large volume of goods
- Transitioning trailer parks into homeownership
- Good facilitators
- Improving land access and educational resources
- Empowering members
- Create access to capital
- Advertising available resources
- Wide range of services
- Educate the community
- Bring people together
- Self sufficiency
- Expanding facilities
- Community development
- Youth development
- Work of cooperative development centers
- Building on existing networks
- Identifying new markets
- Food safety
- Creating jobs and leadership
- Creating new tools and resources
- Meeting needs together

Resources: What resources made those successes (see above) possible?

- USDA funding
- Montana Farmer's Union
- Growers and staff working together
- Jan Tusick (knowledge & drive)
- Montana Department of Agriculture
- Montana Department of Commerce
- Visionaries and champions of projects
- Sharing knowledge
- Community support
- Economic developers
- Tribal agencies
- Customers
- Unique contributions
- Montana pride
- Approachable & access to MT legislators
- Strong community network

What is your vision of a cooperative economy?

- Community involvement
- Coops connecting and working together
- Becoming a voice in state and national as the example to be strived to
- Financially successful farms, mature MT produce economy and market, equitable income and standard of living
- More resilient economy
- Creating stronger communities
- Create jobs for rural people
- Inclusive
- Cooperative model is a standard, understood term or concept
- Provide food access to low income individuals
- An inclusive economy
- Working with other local organizations and cooperatives; sharing resources & successes
- Bringing different resources together
- Benefits those without access to resources
- Helps members with long term resiliency and financial planning
- Offers job training and career advancement
- Inclusive economy that serves ALL
- Vibrant, deep community relationships within and between
- Another coop to serve Missoula (worker & member owned)
- A cooperative network like The Stronger Together Co-op network in the Midwest
- Restored ownership to local & to the people
- Shared resource investment; pooling resources
- Every EDC has a cooperative focus in the economic development strategy
- Meets the needs of rural low-income, people-housing, livable wages, accessible healthy food
- Provides opportunity for community building and healthy communities
- Empowers people to subvert the corporate control of basic needs
- Empowers the individual

- Cooperative model in all sectors of the economy
- People engaged in building community that supports economic growth
- Connected coops; a network of food hubs in every W. Montana community
- Food sovereignty & food security
- No unemployment
- Ownership of the businesses and services is from people living in the communities
- Services or goods not provided by the community/region are provided by business who hold similar values
- Triple bottom line
- Meet people where they are in values, then bring everyone into the fold
- A local economy that is secure; no out of state investors controlling future and interests

Vision of coop economy: Where is there agreement? Key points from above list?

- Shared resources
- Stronger communities
- Resiliency
- Networked
- Equitable
- Empowerment
- Inclusive
- Triple bottom line (environmental and social caretaking)
- Values based economy

Possible strategies/action steps for cooperative collaboration: How do we build on the successes and leverage existing resources to move toward this vision of the cooperative economy? How do our cooperatives work together to move toward the vision of the cooperative economy?

- Facilitated discussion on shared values (food hub network & ROCs)
- Find ways to talk to broader audiences about coops
- Trust MT TA/discussion in Mission Valley
- WMGC CSA Double SNAP & ROC (to continue at SKC Food Access Roundtable)
- NMCDC/MCFC/WMGC Community Dinners
- MT Food Economy Initiative Forum
- SKC/Flathead Tech for Good
 - o Next theme? Shelter/coops
- SKC food sovereignty – share coop knowledge/models with tribal council
 - o Statute change to allow coops?
- Organizing around essential needs food/shelter
- Energy coop solar?
- Research coop models to address ROC needs – home rehab, internet

Next steps/individual commitments: What specific, concrete are you willing to commit to taking to move these strategies forward toward the vision of a cooperative economy? (Participants wrote down their answers and shared with the group.)