

World Café Responses

1. What do you wish to gain from the Summit?

Learn about coops and cooperative model

- Represent sponsor – look at how co-ops and community development go hand in hand.
- Interested in local food systems and how co-ops can help, benefit local communities and what that will look like.
- More understanding of how co-ops work – different cooperative models.
- Learn about coop housing.
- Knowledge of general co-op.
- How the cooperative model can take over the world/topple capitalism.
- Interested in the co-op model.
- Get ideas about how to solve problems.
- Connect with working models.
- Financial management of co-ops.
- Hear about co-op activities in Montana and the rest of the US.
- Co-op 101

Networking

- Networking – getting to know Montana co-op scene.
- Networking (regional stakeholders) – how that network can support each other.
- To meet new people and learn what they do.
- Connect with people.
- Network, share ideas with others with similar ideas.
- Meet people.
- Networking and partnerships with other parts of the state.
- Meet others in co-ops and understand need of coops/members.
- Principle #6: Foster networking among co-ops to help each other.
- People talking about co-ops is always a good thing.

Support Coop Development/Movement

- Let people stay in Montana.
- How co-ops can impact other avenues.
- Are there other areas/sectors that a co-op can facilitate?
- What is a co-op and how can it function in bringing communities together.
- Co-ops working together.
- Co-op to Co-op collaboration
- Vertical integration
- Energize participants to pursue co-ops as a business model.
- How to better



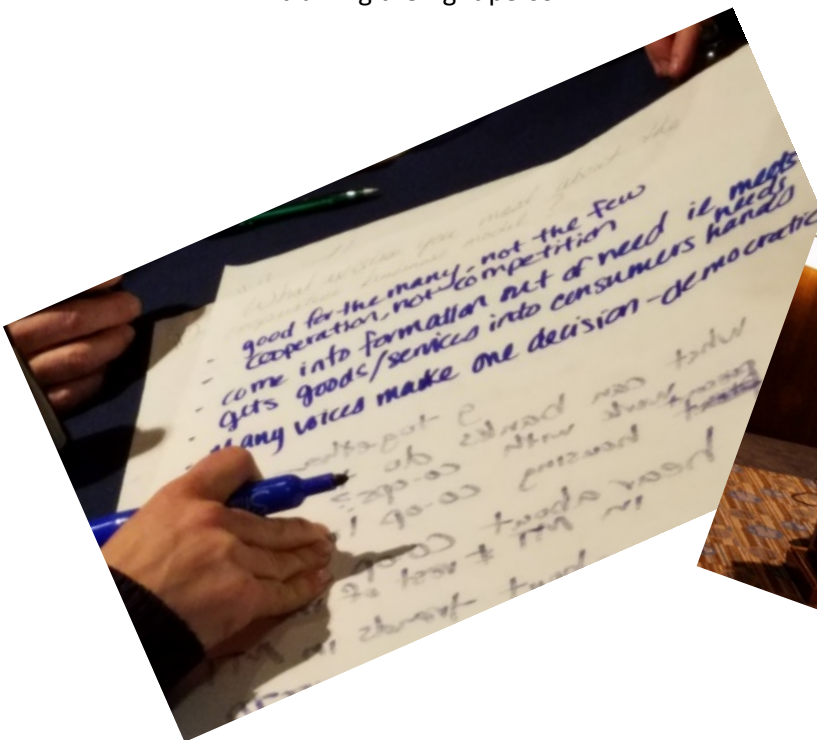
support interest in developing the co-op model.

Get, Give, Share Ideas

- Understanding of how to move a new co-op forward.
- More knowledge of the finance part of things.
- What benefits are there for Healthcare/Homecare?
- Learning what needs are out there.
- What do co-ops need to succeed?
- Inspiration to do more.
- Learn what people are passionate about.
- Stories of co-ops in Montana.
- Montana Lass Farm (Eureka – meet up with Lauri Gaben).
- Learn more about operation of co-ops.
- Understanding the financial and governance role on the board.
- Ideas about hiring processes and how to find the right manager, training the right person.
- What can banks do to work with co-ops?
- Present housing co-op loan program.
- Curious about trends in Montana.
- Conversion of business to co-op.
- Ideas
- Creative funding
- Grant help
- Learn about any new co-ops that have started since last year or what new coops are in the works.
- Learn about resources of co-ops.
- Coop breweries!!!
- How to use co-ops to direct investment dollars into local economy.
- Talk to people about blending co-op and CLT (community land trust) model.

What excites you most about the cooperative business model?

Cooperation versus



Competition



- Many voices make one decision – democratic.
 - Democracy as a daily practice – little “d.”
 - Sharing ideas – 1 share, 1 vote = equity in ownership and decision making.
 - The idea of collaboration and not competition.
 - Way to raise equity.
 - Good for the many, not the few.
 - Cooperation, not competition.
 - Coming together to solve problems.
 - Interpersonal dynamics – learning between people.
 - The democratic, social aspect – everyone has a say.
- Member owned – stone soup, everybody brings what they have.
 - Being part of a group. Work on project together.
 - Transparency, sharing profits.
 - Democratic model and recycling potential profits.
 - Returning ownership to people.
 - Turning competition into cooperation.
 - A way for people to share building equity when otherwise an individual may not be able to.
 - Member owned – buy in
 - Effective way of pooling resources.
 - Cooperation among cooperative.

A Viable Business Model

- A viable alternative way of doing business – still capitalistic but not corporate, little “c.”
- Flexible, innovative business model.
- The resurgence of cooperative need (100 years ago – 2017).
- New business model – more community impact.
- Expanding opportunities for new business and networking (and marketing).
- Applicable to many different industries and community needs.
- Different uses
- Alternative to straight capitalism.

Survival of Rural America

- Saving Rural America from “Big Business.”
- Community reinvestment - \$ leaving Rural Montana and does not come back. Coops help retain \$.
- Providing services that would not otherwise be available (i.e. grocery store, housing).
- Safety net for rural communities.
- Preservation of culture/rural heritage.
- Coops fill a need where no one else wants to go.
- Alternative way to bring jobs to Rural America.
- Helps bring farmers into agriculture.
- It serves the local community with jobs and self sustainability.
- Empower the community and individual – community resilience, community choice, inclusivity.
- Like the whole community aspect.
- Represents a means of community reinvestment! (keep it local)
- Came into formation out of a need – i.e. meets needs.
- Small town survival – add more resources for small towns.
- Builds on local assets and strengths.
- Get goods/services into consumer’s hands.

Social Impact

- Excited about youth becoming interested in cooperatives – social enterprise.
- Leadership development
- Social mission
- Sense of community/community involvement.

2. What concerns you most about entering or operating within the co-op world?

Cooperating

- Board involvement.
- The number of members that have a say/you're accountable to versus owner operated.
- How to move from an individualist paradigm to a win-win style of thinking that enables cooperative decision making.
- Depending on others.
- Equal responsibility.
- Maintaining democratic/egalitarian community.
- Giving up individual decisions.
- Getting the wrong people at the table (right people on the bus).
- Going rogue because you don't understand the difference between a co-op, nonprofit or traditional business.
- Understanding the difference between governance and operation (brewmaster versus members).
- Maintaining enthusiasm and momentum (once novelty has worn off). Communicating with new members.
- Ensure that members are what you want.
- Define responsibility – herding cats.
- Management has huge responsibility to members.
- Member's commitment to co-op.
- Including new members.
- Corrupt or out of date boards – older members.

Financing

- Complications of financing and structure.
- Financial liability held by board members.
- Financial viability.
- Cash flow
- Handling debt as a co-op member.
- Finding enough \$ to get off the ground.
- Raising equity/capital.
- Start up commitment.
- What financial tools are available?
- Value of patronage versus dividends on preferred stocks.
- Preferred stocks – how to make it a carrot rather than a risk.

Risk

- How d you get to scale?
- Lack of knowledge – mine and others.
- I knew nothing about them prior to attending.
- I have seen too many struggling co-ops.
- Losing co-ops original vision.
- Worry about entire community.
- Competition in saturated market
- Advantages of LLC or S corp.

- Going into industries where the profit margin is tight but need is out there (high).
- Can we diversify?
- Be open to innovation on how to create a co-op.
- “Owning our future.”

Governance/Operation

- Responsibility and commitment.
- Declining member participation after the initial formation hype has passed. How to maintain the excitement.
- How to adapt to changing needs/environments/markets when a board has a certain way of thinking.
- Not getting the buy in from the community that is needed to make it work/viable.
- Structural – liability, legality, losing your investment.
- Engagement/sustainability of owner involvement.
- Policy making.
- Control issues.
- Loyalty with new generation.
- Term limits on boards.
- Leadership development.
- Generational ownership
- Communication

3. How can we help get the most out of the event?

Networking Opportunities

- How food hubs can work together.
- How other sectors can network and incorporate in what each other is doing.
- Networking and learning.
- Exchanging information between different types of co-ops.
- Networking
- Active pairing and small group discussion.
- Connecting people with like/similar needs; i.e. distribution, marketing
- This networking is good – examples both good and bad.
- Provide contacts, powerpoint slides, walk-away action challenge.
- Networking
- Getting to know the people and communication.
- Facilitated networking.
- Break outs/out of sessions – Networking.
- Names and connections.
- Mixing people up.
- Engaged and good discussion.
- More stories – conversations.
- Honoring scheduled breaks between sessions.

Resources

- How do co-ops work.
- Learn how to teach about co-ops.

- Copy of slides asap!
- Get me a distributor.
- Learning about different forms of co-ops.
- Resource clearinghouse.
- Sharing resources.
- Discussion forum.
- Provide PowerPoint, materials, etc. Post to web – send info back out.
- Strategies for cash flow.

Follow up

- Can bonding be a part of the cooperative model?
- Action plans
- Montana cooperative model expertise.
- Keep energy going after event.
- Build a pathway to a future summit that meets the needs of all people.
- Follow up with attendees with key learnings.
- Consider mentorship → solutions lounge.



