



# Conversation Guidebook

## How Co-ops can help Solve Problems in Community

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# Introduction



The purpose of this self serve guidebook is to support anyone looking to create change to understand how the co-op model can help solve problems or challenges in community.

It is also designed to be inclusive especially in relation to showcasing how marginalized and racialized communities have used the co-op model to create change in their communities.

The **Design Principles** for this guidebook are:

- To show how the story of marginalized and racialized people have been involved in co-operation and co-ops as part of their culture for many years.
- To showcase examples of co-ops led by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) people.
- To show how flexible the co-op model can be in helping to solve problems in community.
- To support BIPOC communities to create more just, equitable, diverse and inclusive community-based economic development.

## Conversation Goals

- Find out what people knew about co-ops before the meeting.
- Find out what kind of problems / challenges in community people would like to address.
- Demonstrate the flexibility of co-op model to address a variety of challenges.
- Showcase how co-ops are being used, and have been used, by BIPOC communities to create change.



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# Overview



**Goal:** Get a sense of all the modules included here, and how to use.

## Use What Makes Sense for You!

There are 7 modules in this Co-op Conversation Guidebook, but you do not have to use all of them or use all of them at once.

The idea is for a host(s) to be able to pick and choose which modules make sense for them to use and when. We have tried to make things flexible. Feedback on these modules and how they work for you is also welcome.

Module 1: Getting Started

Module 2: What is a Co-op?

Module 3: Relevance of Co-ops for BIPOC Communities

Module 4: Case Studies

Module 5: Identifying Challenges to Work On in Community

Module 6: Learning More about Co-ops

Module 7: Closing



**Total Time:** 2.5 - 4 hours approximately, depending on group size and how many modules you want to do at once.

**Host:** Should have some experience working with groups. No expertise in co-ops though is required.

## Tips for Working with Groups!

### Community Guidelines

It is normal to have conflict in groups, but setting up some community guidelines at the beginning can help everyone to work together well.

Use a flipchart or some paper you can post on a wall, and ask participants what they think could be some important guidelines for a group of people to work well together.



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# Module 1

## Getting Started



**Goal:** Getting to know each other.



**Time:** 15 - 30 minutes, depending on group size.

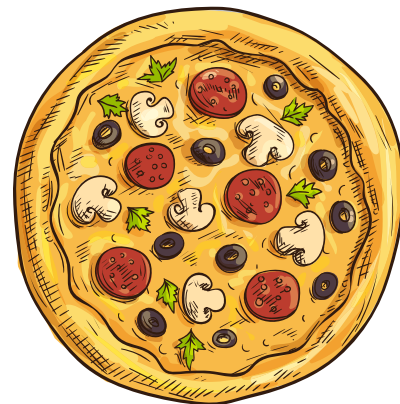
### Host:

When possible, we suggest bringing people together for a meal or light refreshments before the session(s), as a midway break or at the end of the meeting so they can have the chance to connect with each other, learn about each other and network.

Providing refreshments can make the session more accessible but having a potluck could also cut costs when needed.

Introduce yourself and explain what you're hoping to achieve by offering this session.

**Set up:** Ideally, organize in a circle around a table, provide name tags for groups of people who don't know each other.



### Participants:

Go around circle, everyone introduces themselves and their respective community or organization, what they already know about co-ops and what they hope to get out of the session.



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# Module 2

## What is a Co-op?

**Goal:** Understand the basics of what co-ops are and how they can help solve problems / challenges in community.



**Time:** 15 - 20 min

Cooperatives are people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realize their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations.

Cooperatives bring people together in a democratic and equal way. Whether the members are the customers, employees, users or residents, cooperatives are democratically managed by the 'one member, one vote' rule. Members share equal voting rights regardless of the amount of capital they put into the enterprise.

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

As businesses driven by values, not just profit, cooperatives share internationally agreed principles and act together to build a better world through cooperation. Putting fairness, equality and social justice at the heart of the enterprise, cooperatives around the world are allowing people to work together to create sustainable enterprises that generate long-term jobs and prosperity.

The cooperative model is quite flexible to meet the needs of the members. Here are several different types of co-ops:

- Producer / Marketing Cooperatives
- Consumer Cooperatives
- Worker Cooperatives
- Housing Cooperatives
- Financial Cooperatives
- New Generation Cooperatives
- Multi-Stakeholder Cooperatives
- Non-profit Community Service Cooperatives

**Source:** <https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/what-is-a-cooperative>

**Host:** Present the co-op definition below to participants through a slide show or handouts and take time to answer any questions. Feel free to use this information to create slides and/or handouts.

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Cooperatives allow people to take control of their economic future and, because they are not owned by shareholders, the economic and social benefits of their activity stay in the communities where they are established. Profits generated are either reinvested in the enterprise or returned to the members.

The cooperative movement is far from being a marginal phenomenon; at least 12% of humanity is a cooperator of any of the 3 million cooperatives on earth.

# Module 3

## Relevance of Co-ops for BIPOC Communities

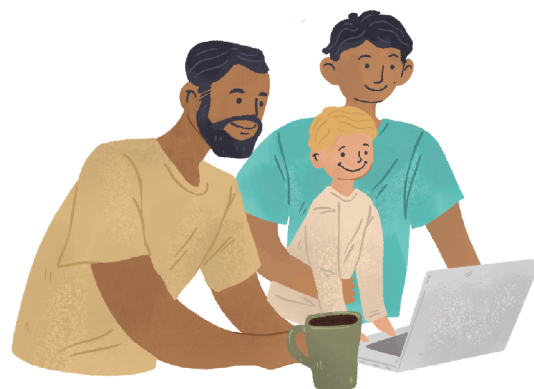
**Goal:** Understand the history and modern day relevance of co-ops for BIPOC communities.

**Host:** Present one or both videos to participants to relay the cultural relevance of co-ops in BIPOC Communities.

**Participants:** Reflect on and discuss what stood out for each about either or both videos.



**Time:** 30 - 45 minutes,  
depending on group size.



### **History Video (8 minutes):**

Jessica Gordon Nembhart discusses the historical significance of cooperatives in Black America.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vlzk94djupg&t=1s>

### **Modern Day Relevance Video (16 minutes):**

Members of several BIPOC led co-ops share their stories of operating during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtUd2q7Ofps>



Video links also available under Resources in Co-op Learning section on iMOVE website.

# Module 4

## Practice Creating a Co-op

**Goal:** Explore how the co-op model could help address changes you want to create in your community.



**Time:** 30 - 60 minutes

**Host:** Ask participants to discuss the questions below and help them brainstorm by writing ideas on the board/screen about how increased co-operation and the co-op model could help create change in their communities.

**Participants:** Reflect on and discuss each person's thoughts on questions below, and working together also discuss whether a co-op could help create the kind of change people are looking for in their communities.



### Questions:

- What kind of change would you like to see in your community? Identify a common goal.
- What type of co-op do you think could help you accomplish your goal? See info in Module 2.
- What barriers, worries or concerns could get in your way, and how could you address them?

# Module 5

## Examples of BIPOC Co-ops

**Goal:** Learn how the co-op model is already working in other BIPOC communities.



**Time:** 30 minutes



### Host:

Organize participants into groups of 2-3, hand out different examples for each group to read and discuss. Then have each group summarize their discussions for everyone else.

Examples are available **here** and under Resources in Co-op Learning section of iMOVE website.



### Participants:

Discuss example for up to 10 minutes in your group then present to the rest of the group, and review all examples together.

# Module 6

## Learning More About Co-ops

**Goal:** Explore participants' interests so new topics and approaches can be implemented into future learning opportunities.



**Time:** 20 - 30 minutes

### Host:

- Go around to each person and ask what questions or concerns they have.
- Ask what they would like to learn more about.
- Take down participants' responses to inform future programming/support.
- Encourage folks to do their own research and share any new resources with facilitators.



More Learning & Resources under Co-op Learning section of iMOVE's website at:

**[inmyownvoice.ca](https://inmyownvoice.ca)**

# Module 7

## Closing

**Goal:** Reflection, next steps and where to go to learn more.



**Time:** 15 - 30 minutes

**Host:** Thank participants for engaging and inform them how they can learn more on iMOVE's website.

**[inmyownvoice.ca](https://inmyownvoice.ca)**



Go around circle and ask everyone to:

- Fill out contact sheet for further learning opportunities.
- Ask what stood out the most for them about this session.
- Fill out a short anonymous survey about the session.
- Talk about potential next steps for learning more or creating one's own co-op.

Please let us know at iMOVE how your session goes, any ideas for improvement or any questions you have. Email us at **[inmyownvoiceinfo@gmail.com](mailto:inmyownvoiceinfo@gmail.com)**