

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.

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.