



Center for Cooperatives

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

**COLLECTIVE ACTION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES:
MAPPING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COOPERATIVE
CONVERSION AND START-UP**

USDA AFRI Project:

February 2016-February 2020

Year I: Identifying Cooperative Start-Up Clusters

Advisory Committee Status Report

December 5, 2016

Introduction

This report summarizes the implementation and the results of the Cooperative Development Survey, which was administered during May – September 2016 to organizations engaged in cooperative development activities.

The survey is a Year One activity in the multi-year project on *Collective Action in Rural Communities: Mapping Opportunities for Cooperative Conversion and Start-up*. Funded by a USDA AFRI grant, the applied research project is aimed at better understanding and enhancing opportunities for cooperative entrepreneurship by identifying and researching clusters of cooperative activity. The project also aims to engage stakeholders in a participatory process to create the tools to analyze and better understand community-level data. The development and refinement of these tools will support the more systematic development of cooperatives.

Because, cooperative development data is not readily available, a primary Year One activity has been to develop and execute a survey program to gather data on new cooperative development activity. This report summarizes the survey project.

Survey Instrument

An online survey was chosen as the most cost-effective method of reaching possible respondents and collecting data on new cooperative activity. The University of Wisconsin-Madison provides a supported Qualtrics survey software program, and this platform was used to develop and administer the survey.

UWCC staff reviewed the goals of the project and drafted an initial draft of the survey. Staff also developed a first draft of a contact list of organizations that had potentially been active in cooperative development in the last five years, or would have knowledge of these activities.

As part of the initial grant proposal development, UWCC staff put together an Advisory Committee for this project that was composed of leaders from selected cooperative development organizations. The Advisory Committee was asked to review the survey and distribution list, and provide input.

The survey was written and formatted to be a simple data collection tool for cooperatives incorporated from 2011 to the present, and requested data for:

- Cooperative name;
- Cooperative address;
- State of Incorporation;
- Year of incorporation;
- Whether the incorporation was the result of a conversion;
- Sector;
- Type.

The invitation email included a unique link for each recipient, which allowed the responder to access and enter data into the survey multiple times before final submission of the completed survey.

To make data submission as easy as possible, the email invitations, reminders, and the survey text all provided phone and email contact information for questions about the online survey, and offered alternative ways of submitting the data outside of the survey format if preferred.

Email List

Staff assembled a list of email addresses of individuals and organizations involved in cooperative development work, or that would have knowledge of recent cooperative incorporations. Staff involvement in direct cooperative development activities, and as well as in professional, governmental, and sectoral networks informed this list development process.

The list was reviewed by the Advisory Committee, and their suggestions and additional online research refined the list. The list initial list totaled 124 contacts.

Distribution

Staff used Qualtrics survey software to send individualized email invitations to participate in the survey on May 20, 2016. The emails were distributed over the name of UWCC's executive director.

Several new invitations were also sent out over the course of the summer to new or corrected email addresses.

In June and July, follow-up emails were sent to non-responders using Qualtrics software. The original link to the survey was included in each of these surveys.

A thank-you email was automatically sent to a respondent when the survey was submitted.

Targeted, personal follow-up emails from key staff to selected cooperative development non-respondents were sent immediately after Labor Day.

The following table summarize the email distribution efforts.

List	Quantity	Date	Bounces	Dupes	Net Distribution
Invite sent	128	May-16	4	1	123
Reminder	118	May-16	5	1	112
Reminder	110	Jun-16	4	1	105
Final Reminder	101	Jun-16	4	1	96
Targeted follow-up	37	Sept 6- Sept 19	1	0	36

Response

Out of the 123 contacts who received invitations and reminders to participate in the survey project, 77 opened and started the survey, or 63%. A total of 40 surveys were completed, or 52% of the surveys that were started. The percentage of contacts that eventually submitted completed surveys was 33%.

TABLE 2

Net Distribution	Survey Starts	% Recipients - Survey Starts	Surveys Finished - Online	Offline Survey Submissions	Total Surveys Complete	% Surveys Starts - Completed	% Recipients-Survey Completes
123	77	63%	34	6	40	52%	33%

Data Collected

The survey project collected the names of 715 cooperatives. Only 208 were actually submitted through the online survey; the remainder were submitted in standalone documents.

These names were reviewed and 625 unique cooperative names were identified. Not all data requested was submitted for each cooperative. Online look-ups were used to supplement missing address, sector and type data for submitted cooperative names if available.

A listing of those cooperatives is attached as an appendix.

Comments were submitted with several cooperatives which noted potential dissolution or a current inactive status. However, no adjustments to reporting have been made based these comments. Current status information was not collected in the survey. The survey focus was on development activity, and significant additional effort would be required to gather and report current cooperative status. Follow-up research on survivability may be addressed later in this 4-year research project.

Mapping

The 625 cooperatives have been mapped: <http://goo.gl/by8U8I>

Each cooperative has been mapped according to its street address. If no street address was available, the cooperative has been mapped to a central location in the city. If only state is available, then the cooperative has been mapped to the state capital. A program has been written so that the indicators for cooperatives with the same address are arrayed without overlap, and are all accessible.

All data collected for each cooperative can be seen viewed by clicking the dot marking the cooperative's location.

Next Steps

It is expected that further refinements to the data collected on new cooperatives will be made. Mapping that allows selections based on cooperative characteristics will result.