

## A COOPERATIVE HEALTH CHECK



Cooperatives are a flexible business model. They operate based on the seven principles of cooperation:

-  **Open Membership:** Membership is the lifeblood, but whether the members are staff, consumers, businesses or other organizations, coming together is their choice. Anyone who is eligible to be a member should be able to become a member.
-  **Equal Say:** All members get an equal say. For example, if you are electing a Board, it is one member, one vote rather than votes based on how much money you have put in.
-  **Economic Participation:** Cooperative members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the business' capital.
-  **Good for Learning:** Cooperatives have a long tradition of training and education for members.
-  **Independence:** Cooperatives shouldn't be beholden to anybody, whether government or another business.
-  **Collaboration:** Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
-  **Community:** Commitment to community is engrained in the cooperative structure. Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

## BE COOPERATIVE!

If this brief guide to cooperatives has whetted your appetite, there are plenty of resources to help you find out more and get involved.

**Stay in touch with cooperative action at:**

[www.ncba.coop](http://www.ncba.coop)  
[www.go.coop](http://www.go.coop)

**Find out about membership for cooperatives from:**

[www.ncba.coop/join](http://www.ncba.coop/join)

**Get cooperative business advice and support from:**

[www.ncba.coop](http://www.ncba.coop)  
[www.cooperationworks.coop](http://www.cooperationworks.coop)

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National Cooperative Business Association



From the **outside** a cooperative may look like any other business.

What is a  
**cooperative**

What happens  
**inside**  
makes it  
different.

COOPERATIVES  
ARE OWNED BY **PEOPLE**  
LIKE YOU!

**Cooperatives exist to serve their members,** whether they are the customers, employees or the local community.

What's more, these members are the owners, with an equal say in what the cooperative does. So, as well as getting the products and services they need, members help shape the decisions their cooperative makes.

Across the United States, cooperatives are owned by more than 130 million people — and these numbers are growing.

**Look for cooperatives near you.**

COOPERATIVES  
**SHARE THEIR PROFITS**  
AMONG MEMBERS

Cooperatives want to trade successfully — they are businesses, not charities, after all. Members, such as farmers or freelancers, tenants or taxi drivers, can often do better working together. And sharing the profit is a way to keep it fair and make it worthwhile. Rather than rewarding outside investors, **a cooperative shares its profits among the members.**

**EXPERIENCE  
THE COOPERATIVE  
DIFFERENCE!**

**There are over 29,000 cooperative businesses in the United States.**

They are not just supermarkets and credit unions, although these are among the most successful cooperatives found across the country.

Cooperatives work in all parts of the economy, from healthcare to housing, farms to funeral societies, credit unions to child care, marketing to manufacturing, wind energy to worker owned.

COOPERATIVES  
ARE A **SUCCESS**  
AROUND THE WORLD

This mix of **self-help and mutual aid** has made cooperatives an international force for good. 100 million people around the world are employed by cooperatives, while 800 million are members.

- Kenyan farmers trade their coffee for a fair price only because they are members of cooperatives.
- In France, nine out of ten farmers maintain their livelihood by being part of a cooperative.
- In Spain, the fans of Barcelona have a say in their football club because it's owned by them.

**JOIN IN!**  
**Become a member  
of a cooperative.**