



Manual For
Student-Run
Food Cooperatives

cooperative food
COFED
empowerment directive

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INTRODUCTION

This Manual helps you, a student or a team, open a food co-op on your campus. We organized this Manual around a “game plan” process that covers four major areas: organizing, planning, campaigning, and fundraising. Our manual outlines a strategy moving through each area. This section introduces student-run food co-ops. It then explains the major parts of the manual, followed by a series of tables that summarize the manual overall.

Although this Manual has useful information for those who are actually operating a cooperative cafe or storefront, it leaves out instructions for actually running a co-op. There is an enormous difference between opening this model and running it successfully. For support regarding operations, see the handbooks we've shared (Appendices G, H, I) or contact info@cofed.org and your Regional Organizer for support. CoFED plans to develop additional resources and support related to operations and long-term co-op success.

Student-run Food Co-ops

The Case for Student-Run Food Co-ops

For decades, student-run cooperative¹ groceries, bulk-buying clubs, food carts, delis, and cafés have been operating successfully on college campuses across North America. Student-run food co-ops satisfy their student member's needs. As well, these co-ops create entrepreneurial opportunities for students to promote sustainable food systems while channeling their passion into meaningful careers.

Most existing student-run food co-ops have focus on sustainability and social justice, offering meaningful exposure to and real-world education in economic, social, environmental, and other global issues tied to food systems. A co-op creates space on or near a campus for professional development and service to the community. These projects empower students to drive change in local food system, challenging the status quo of conventional food services and providers that fail to offer delicious, healthy, affordable, and sustainable food. Students gain valuable skills and experience in business, such as management, leadership, and decision-making in a group, and in food and agriculture, including menu planning, food safety procedures, food and agriculture politics, and community economics.

“Because there’s a thirst on campus for something that feels communal, participatory and cozy that set the stage for this structure.”

- Stephanie Velednitsky, San Diego Food Co-op

The Cooperative Model in a Broader Context

There is an important connection between the student-run co-op movement and the sustainable foods and food justice movements. The cooperative business model, being deeply rooted in a community and formed to serve that community's needs, offers a powerful tool for progressive change and social movements.

All of the student-run food co-ops we have examined emphasize environmental stewardship in their mission statement and food purchasing policies. One of the universal guiding principles of cooperatives is the “concern for community,” as first articulated in the 1930s, by the Rochdale Principles, and today, by the International Cooperative Alliance's (ICA) Statement of Cooperative Identity (*Appendix A*). A focus on sustainable foods is one way of exercising this value as a food co-op.

Many progressives recognize the cooperative model as a viable alternative to businesses that prioritize financial gain for the individual owners and shareholders. In a review of new social movements and organizations, sociologist Leslie Brown argues that “cooperatives correspond to a substantial degree to the characteristics of organizations needed for

¹ The difference between a *cooperative* and *collective* deserves attention. A *cooperative* is usually a business or other organization run and owned democratically for the benefit of its members. A *collective* is a more open-ended term; a collective is democratically run by its members, but can also be an organization or shared space that does not necessarily benefit its members economically. In many states the term cooperative has a very specific legal meaning and there are barriers to nonprofits using the term ‘cooperative’ in their name, whereas almost any type of organization or business could call itself a collective.

sustainable community development and [...] have many of the organizational features said to be needed by the contemporary economy.” Similarly, Nobel Prize laureate Elinor Ostrom argues that the collective management of natural resources in various parts of the world has led to more sustainable use of those resources as opposed to a completely privatized market system or a socialistic government’s oversight of those resources would otherwise provide. Back in the 1930s, a surge of co-ops emerged in response to the Great Depression. Groups of individuals created housing, grocery, and other types of co-ops as a way of saving money on their living expenses. This era saw the creation of two very famous student-housing co-ops: the Ann Arbor co-ops and the Berkeley Student Cooperative. In the 1960s and 1970s, another wave of co-ops arose on campus across North America. As Craig Cox explains in *Storefront Revolution* (1994), this wave was inspired to provide an alternative economic model and, as in the case of food co-ops in particular, to provide “revolutionary” foods that were healthier, less processed, and made by community-oriented businesses. Examples include the Maryland Food Collective, Earthfoods Café, Mixed Nuts, Kresge Natural Foods, and others. Cox explains that a wide variety of community organizers turned to the cooperative business model as a way to further their causes in a more transformative way instead of taking to more traditional forms of protests and demonstrations.

Challenges that Student Food Co-ops Face

Student co-ops have faced many obstacles - this manual aspires to help students overcome or avoid these obstacles all together. Some student-run food co-ops have poor record keeping, some have only minimal training for new workers, some face turbulent relationships with their universities and some lack the financial capital to move into more appropriate locations. All of these issues affect the success of their project. On the other hand, some student co-ops have practices in place that successfully address these kinds of challenges and this manual seeks to highlight the best practices and point out pitfalls in the process of creating a student run food cooperative. Achieving a balance between efficient operations and pleasing all stakeholders is the function of the cooperative model and can be a source of strength.

CoFED Resources

CoFED offers a wide variety of resources to help create new co-ops. These range from Regional Organizers providing support to documents serving as templates. Since we are a new organization, these resources are constantly under development, so get in touch with your Regional Organizer if you need more information!

Regional Organizers: The Regional Organizers are the support system for your region. They'll be facilitating a week-long summer retreat to help solidify your team and plans. They will visit your campus at least once during the spring semester to help you build momentum. Remember - they are just one phone or skype call away to mentor you through the major steps of planning or any challenges that arise!

National and Regional Network: Email lists are your tool to maintain communication with each other. Use them to receive peer-peer support as well as build a professional and personal food co-op network to refer to in the future. Email info@cofed.org to join our national listserv and also, email your Regional Organizer to be placed on a regional list.

Consultants Cabinet: To help you out and give you legitimacy with your campus administrators, we've asked some of the most seasoned professionals we know, to be available for a few hours each month, to take calls or emails from you and answer any questions you have.

Important documents: Need to create a business plan? Financial projections? A market survey? Why not build on what already exists? Check out <http://www.cofed.org/resources/> to access a wealth of information.

Social Media: CoFED's website provides info on our Regional Organizers and consultants and will also connect you to our start-up manual, sample organizing documents and templates. Taken together, our other social media has a strong following and offers a platform for co-ops to generate publicity for themselves.

Fiscal Sponsorship: A lot of start-ups want to take tax-deductible donations, and CoFED can help you with that! Typical rate for these transactions is 10% of total revenue, but CoFED has a fiscal sponsor that allows us to charge as little as 5%! Email info@cofed.org to get started!

Game Plan Overview

| 1. ORGANIZING | 2. PLANNING | 3. CAMPAIGNING | 4. FUNDRAISING |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Core Team | Concept Design | Space Search | Asks and Events |
| Coordinators and Committees | Market Research and Business Plan | Power-Mapping and Relationship Building | Campus Loans/Grants/Green Fees |
| Publicity and Labor | Policy and Operations Plan | Lease Negotiations | Money Management |

1. ORGANIZING

People are the most important part of this project. Securing the right team is crucial to your project's success. In this section of the manual, you will find advice on recruiting student leaders to be part of your **core team** and ways to keep them involved. As support grows, you will need to keep a large group of people organized and engaged while remaining effective; i.e. you will likely need to build **committees and coordinators**. As support grows, a large group of organized, engaged, and effective people enables productive meetings and on-the-ground work. In the later phases, you will need **publicity and labor** as well as evidence that you have student support in these areas.

2. PLANNING

Planning guides the efforts of everyone involved as you meet with administrators and move closer to opening. Your plan will begin as a **concept design**, a rough idea of what you want to see on your campus. To create it, your group needs to research other student co-ops and do a lot of brainstorming. Your concept design is the first step toward creating a business plan. As you move forward, begin to flesh out your concept design by incorporating supportive **market research**. This will bring you to your **business plan**. The business plan offers a compelling document to convince stakeholders that your project is one to take seriously and that it can be successful. Eventually, the co-op will take shape with a **policy and operations plan**.

3. CAMPAIGNING

A physical space dictates the form your food co-op takes. Additionally, location is key. Though student food co-ops can revitalize underutilized spaces, having high traffic is key to financial viability. Through a successful **space search** that considers factors relevant to your project you will identify several options for a suitable space – possibly shaping the project as a result. While **power mapping** helps to pinpoint the right university officials, community members and property managers, **relationship building** with these individuals may give you more space options and **lease negotiations**. Once you locate the space, you will need to begin **lease negotiations** and the permitting, certification and other requirements.

4. FUNDRAISING

Start-up capital is essential to getting a project up and running. There are many methods for securing funding through your campus or community. Initial grassroots efforts like **asks and events** that build momentum for your cause and show dedication to power-brokers. Raising the \$40–150k+ necessary to open through **campus loans, grants, green fees**, and support from student government and fee referendums, campus groups, and external organizations will require a compelling plan with strong support. Finally, **money management** is a critical part of handling fundraising and revenue once your co-op opens to the public.

5. FOOD AND EDUCATION

This manual also includes a section on food and education. Educating students about the importance of sustainable food presents an invaluable tool for gaining and maintaining student support for a co-op. This section discusses building a food movement on your campus and how to maintain those food standards for your co-op.

Game Plan Vision, Action, and Resources

The tables below present a more concise version of the information in this manual. The left-hand column presents a vision of what each section is designed to achieve. The middle column identifies action items that will help get you there. The right-hand column lists resources that CoFED has to offer.

1. ORGANIZING

| GOAL | ACTION ITEMS | CoFED RESOURCES |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Core Team Consists of 3-6 student leaders with diversity. The team needs experience organizing on campus, developing student groups and initiatives, working in cooperatives, and general business skills.</p> <p>Try to include graduate students as well as new undergraduates.</p> | <p>Go to other student group meetings; observe who the movers are in the group (not just the leadership) and set up meetings with them. Listen to what gets them fired up and what their experiences are.</p> <p>Make announcements at group meetings, at dinners in co-ops or fraternities/sororities, or in classes. Know your audience well and present yourself effectively.</p> <p>Hold regular group meetings once you recruit people, especially if they relate to group events (dinners, farmers market outings, lectures, movie nights, etc.)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking Points • Sample Recruitment Flyers • Sample Recruitment Plan |
| <p>Coordinators & Committees 6-15 coordinators. Each needs to be able to lead a committee, delegate tasks effectively, and empower team members.</p> | <p>Begin recruiting your coordinating team early – this is an important step! Reach out to people personally.</p> <p>Create task outlines that are specific enough that people know what they are getting into.</p> <p>Create a rigorous and transparent hiring or election policy for deciding how people move into positions.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Descriptions/ Manual • “Committees and Coordinators” Section |
| <p>Publicity and Labor Before soliciting funding or entering negotiations, show that you have support (a grant submitted by the University of Oregon co-op was rejected because they didn't have enough evidence for student support).</p> <p>Support can derive from market research. Measure public support and use it as a wedge with administrators and funders.</p> | <p>Circulate petitions and/or email sign-ups in classes or at tabling events. Compile an e-mail list so you can reach out to the students who support you.</p> <p>Hold events for new members, hold community dinners or other outreach.</p> <p>Conduct an informal survey asking if students would dine, shop, or volunteer at a new co-op.</p> <p>Get statements of support from student groups, the student government, and faculty members.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example Petitions • Example Events, Manual Events Section • Example Statement of Support From Student Government Association at UW, on the web |

2. PLANNING

| GOAL | ACTION ITEMS | CoFED RESOURCES |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Concept Design Develop initial ideas through discussions with administrators, funders, and other students.</p> <p>Feedback from these discussions will become your one-page pitch, which attracts additional input and helps generate future documents.</p> | <p>Host open brainstorming sessions. Seek input from a wide audience. Interact with and take ideas from other co-ops.</p> <p>Encourage interested and committed individuals to take part in the decision-making process. Limit this to those who have showed a clear commitment or add value to the conversation through their experience and knowledge.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Cooperative Alliance Statement on the Co-operative Identity • Co-op Profiles |
| <p>Market Research Making a business case for your dream requires knowing your market. This includes estimating how many students might dine/shop at your co-op, what they will buy, and why.</p> <p>Organize this information from sources that are outside of your social circle to make an effective case.</p> | <p>Conduct an online survey asking about campus food and asking if students would dine, shop or volunteer at a new co-op. Include specific questions about how often students eat on campus and how much they are willing to spend at a co-op. Ask an experienced business developer or your RO to look over this. Make sure that you'll be able to use all the numbers you create.</p> <p>Present the survey to a wide audience. Often, you can ask the student union/association to distribute this through email to students or all members of the campus community.</p> <p>If you have a budget, you can use something like an iPod as a prize to incentivize people to participate.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Template Market Research and Results • Regional Organizers |
| <p>Business Plan Once you have your market research, your concept design can be filled out with some details and become a legitimate business plan.</p> <p>A business plan helps you think through tough questions and will be an important tool in convincing administrators that the project is serious.</p> | <p>Have your market research compiled in an easy and understandable way.</p> <p>Have an MBA student hold a training or attend a CoFED business planning webinar (coming soon!).</p> <p>Do very simple business planning by doing basic math and using rough, intuitive assumptions. Then question each assumption and try to ground some of them in the data from your market research.</p> <p>You should ideally have the core people who founded it feel a real sense of ownership going through this process – lock five or so of them in a room for a few hours and delegate sections.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Template Business Plan • Finances • Consulting Cabinet • Business Model Canvas Workshop From Regional Organizer • CoFED Trainings And Regional Organizers |
| <p>Operations Plan After you have your business plan and you have pinpointed a space, you are ready to begin the count-down to opening.</p> <p>A timeline to opening and detailed operations plan will help things run smoothly. Many things will come up along the way, but having an outline will help.</p> | <p>Create a timeline with all of the tasks that you need to accomplish in order to open.</p> <p>Get someone with experience in opening storefronts to look over your timeline and operations plan.</p> <p>Delegate each task to a specific person.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations Plan Template • Example Build-Out Schedule (from Gather) • Consultants Cabinet |

3. CAMPAIGNING

| GOAL | ACTION ITEMS | CoFED RESOURCES |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Space Search</p> | <p>Build relationships with a contractor, an architect, a property manager or real estate agent so they can walk through a potential space with you and give you cost estimates.</p> <p>Do additional research about the location/area: what else exists, how much traffic do the stores get?</p> <p>Begin to incorporate (see legal structure) so you can sign as a corporation, rather than as an individual.</p> <p>Find out if there are permitting, certification, or building code issues. If it doesn't have a kitchen, identify a nearby kitchen you could use.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultants Cabinet • Finding the Right Storefront, Manual |
| <p>Relationship building</p> <p>Here's a shortlist of people to begin developing relationships with in rough chronological order:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Campus sustainability office 2. Faculty 3. Student group/leadership advisors 4. Dining services 5. Health inspectors 6. Facilities staff 7. Property manager/real estate agent | <p>Appoint someone to spearhead developing these relationships, particularly someone who will be available long-term.</p> <p>Set-up a meeting with each person you want to develop a relationship with. Confirm beforehand. Email them relevant documents like a one-page pitch. Come with questions. Take notes and make sure to ask for people that you should connect with. Make sure to follow up to thank them.</p> <p>Take what you learn back to your next group meeting and discuss how to take action.</p> <p>Fit these meetings into your timeline for taking action during various phases of your project.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoFED Regional Organizer Meetings • Template One-Pager • Example Powermap in Manual, University Relations |
| <p>Negotiate a lease</p> <p>It is common to grossly under-estimate the time it takes to create, amend, negotiate, and sign a lease.</p> <p>Watch out for hidden costs and responsibilities.</p> | <p>Find a lawyer or paralegal to look over the lease. Confirm that they can render services pro-bono if you don't have the money to pay them.</p> <p>Expect only a few hours of help, and use their time effectively. Do not expect them to prioritize or rush for your project.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultants Cabinet |

4. FUNDRAISING

| GOAL | ACTION ITEMS | CoFED RESOURCES |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Fundraiser Events & Ask Campaigns Start gaining support and clout by hosting fundraisers and asking for small donations.</p> <p>Dinners and other events might net only a few hundred dollars. Donor events such as a gala with some local celebrity, fancy things to bid on in a silent auction, and a solicitation to give at the end might generate several thousand dollars or more.</p> | <p>Create a fundraising committee.</p> <p>Do outreach to local business/farms up to 3 months in advance in order to procure food donations for events. Prepare an ask letter and send them your one pager and how you'll advertise them if they donate food or silent auction items.</p> <p>Create a schedule with people responsible for outreach, presenters, auction items, food and entertainment, or whatever else you decide to incorporate. Check up on the leaders to make sure everything is on track.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events section, Manual • Sample Fundraising Letter |
| <p>Campus grants, fees, loans, etc. As you get closer to opening, you will need to get larger donations. Campus green fees and grants are a good place to start.</p> <p>Depending on equipment purchases, space renovations, staff, etc., your project may require \$40-150k+ to open.</p> <p>Estimates for revenue and profit strengthen solicitations in addition to helping your project succeed.</p> | <p>Ask your student union/association or sustainability office to help identify relevant grants on or off campus.</p> <p>If your school does not have a green fee, start a campaign to create one with the pitch that it can help fund your co-op.</p> <p>Connect with student government officials or do research on whether they have a pool of money that you could lobby to have loaned or granted to you.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example Grants • Sample Letters of Support Regional Organizers |
| <p>Money Management As you receive funds, make sure you have them in order and accounted for.</p> | <p>Start a bank account in the name of your organization.</p> <p>Decide who will have access to it. Limit this to two people until you are operational.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultants Cabinet • Fiscal Sponsorship |

1. ORGANIZING

Creating a Core Team

As a new project, your most valuable asset is people power. Creating a strong team of 3-6 high-functioning individuals is critical in the initial stages. Keeping space open for people to enter into leadership is important, so try not to solidify roles and responsibilities that imply exclusive power within the organization. Your core team is the driving force behind everything that happens. These are people that share a vision and build your culture. Make sure that everyone feels appreciated and supported.

The following characteristics are often present in strong start-up groups. They may be split or shared among multiple individuals working together.

- Passionate, driven to get things done
 - They step forward and keep things moving on schedule – a very important role! Often these characters are active leaders in campus student groups
- Business-minded, exercises good judgment
 - They focus on keeping documents in line, organizing information, maintaining budgets, accounting, quantitative analysis, projections, and all things numbers related
- Focused, compelled to plan things out and keep things organized
 - They focus on keeping documents in line, organizing information, maintaining budgets, accounting, quantitative analysis, projections, and all things numbers related
- Charismatic, politically adept with large network
 - They promote the idea, develop high-value connections, and persuade power-brokers
 - They may work in student government or positions of power within the university
- Artistic and creative
 - They ensure that your brand, image, and public face is always stylish and professional
 - This type helps create attractive materials ranging from logos, flyers, websites and e-newsletters; keeping communication strong and building a sense of identity
- Charismatic, community builder
 - They emanate positive energy to those around them in a way that impassions and empowers
 - This type anchors the vital social side to the project, hosting parties and attracting members while building community and minimizing burn-out

Recruiting Members

Once you have your core team, you will begin forming committees dedicated to specific tasks. You will need to recruit new members to fill these committees. Recruiting and retaining members are two important, ongoing endeavors that student co-ops need to partake in. Recruitment and retention are best thought of as fairly distinct in terms of the work that they require. For many student organizations, generating interest in the organization and getting students to show up to a meeting is relatively easy, however, retaining membership is a difficult and often overlooked responsibility. Once people join the co-op, making them feel comfortable and enthusiastic about staying involved takes time and effort. Some ways to retain members include being clear about your needs; how someone could help, having a specific structure and well defined tasks they can step into. Generally displaying a warm and welcoming attitude towards everyone in the co-op, especially newcomers, will make people want to join.

What got you involved? Here are co-operators' responses...

- a concisely communicated need
- a sense of community around shared values
- passion, energy, excitement from other members
- the many different options for involvement in the organization; ways for people with different skills (artistic, business, charisma) to meaningfully contribute
- free and good food
- connections to other organizations, movements, events

- desire for a unique space that's cool, comfy and not a classroom
- effective organization; productive meetings with reliable time and place
- desire to make a difference and help people
- pursuit of personal growth

Why did you stay/step it up? Here are co-ops' responses...

- made friends and enjoyed the social atmosphere
- flexibility and feeling at home
- desire to step up into a leadership role
- sense of ownership of the organization
- seeing tangible results
- personal asks by current members
- rewards: paycheck, resume building, sense of accomplishment
- being thanked and feeling appreciated

Week of Welcome – WOW! Many college campuses have events during the first week of the semester that are intended to orient students to campus life and activities. These activities often include venues for student organizations to recruit members. Make sure to sign up your co-op for these events that may include tabling, brief presentations and other promotional activities. The beginning of the semester is often a time when students seek out new activities to get involved in and are in the process of determining their schedules for that semester so it's often a great time to get people involved. Events could include:

- tabling events: these can include general student activities fairs or fairs put on for students interesting in particular types of activities
- movie screenings; there are many outstanding documentaries that present strong cases for change in our food system; pick one that speaks to you and organize a screening on/near campus to get prospective members pumped up on food issues
- field trips, picnics, bike rides, skill-shares, and other social events to get people interested in the co-op and to get to know one another

At every outreach event, be sure to have with you:

- a sign-up sheet for prospective members or people who just want to stay in the loop
- pamphlets or flyers with contact and website info (if you have one) and the date/location of the next event or meeting (flyers in dorms during the beginning of the year tend to be particularly effective because freshmen are looking for organizations to join around this time). See *Appendix D* for a Sample Recruitment Flyer.
- other materials like posters, food seasonality charts, events calendar, shirts/pins/stickers, books, food, etc.
- a light/artistic activity, paint pots, tie dye: something interactive and memorable

When recruiting, be sure to establish:

- a personal connection with everyone you talk to who expresses interest
- a welcoming presence; be mindful of how your members doing outreach represent the co-op in terms of personality, appearance and other cultural indicators. Try to represent the culture of your organization in a way that is welcoming to all students.

Looking for more help? See *Appendix E* for a step-by-step recruitment plan.

Talking Points

When talking to students, both individually and in groups, you will need to be able to articulate what the co-op project is and why it is important, clearly and concisely. To do this, you should develop a set of talking points. Talking points make speaking to students and administrators easier by helping you organize your ideas. The talking points may be emphasized differently depending on your audience and will be different for each campus. Here are some inspiring topics to get you started in creating your own!

What is the need?

- Healthy, sustainable food needs to be accessible and affordable on campus if students are going to change the way they eat.
- The food currently available on campus is unethical and environmentally irresponsible.

Why Cooperatives?

- Cooperatives are a method of engaging with that food system.
 - The active involvement that cooperatives demand will educate students about food systems.
- Cooperatives empower students to change the food system and be leaders in their community.
 - Food sovereignty: The community should have some control over its own food.
 - Students can lead a cultural sea change, a national paradigm shift if given the chance to develop cooperative leadership skills.

How will you make this happen?

- We have a concept design and a working business plan.
- We are currently doing market research and searching for a location.
- CoFED supports us with training and resources.

Running Meetings

Planning Ahead is Key

Effective meetings, especially meetings that involve more than a handful of people, require careful planning to ensure that they are productive. There are numerous books about how to run effective meetings, some of which can be helpful, but we've outlined some of the basic necessities of running a meeting, adapted from the Coro Center for Civic Leadership below:

Outcomes: What are the desired outcomes of this meeting? Are there specific decisions that need to be made? Is there information that needs to be shared that's more appropriate for a meeting setting than in small group conversations or by email? Are there people that need to be introduced to one another? Have a clear goal or set of goals in mind at the beginning of planning any meeting.

Agenda: Make an agenda to keep the group focused. Many organizations that have meetings with more than a dozen or so people often have a core group of individuals running the meeting who have detailed agendas with specific notes on who will present what, a list of tasks that need to get delegated and/or other notes for particular agenda items. If you are expecting a long meeting and want to prevent it from being longer than necessary, you may want to set a **time limit** for each agenda item, so that if the group is taking almost or more than that amount of time, the facilitator will either need to move the group on to the next agenda item or ask for the group's permission to spend more time on that item.

Roles & Responsibilities: It should be clear, ahead of time, who will be responsible for each part of the agenda and who will play each role for the meeting (facilitation, time keeping, note taking, etc.). For example, if key information is needed for a particular topic of discussion on the agenda, it should be clear who brings that information to the meeting and make sure that that person is at the meeting. When meetings are held to make decisions, it is also the responsibility of the individuals calling for the meeting to make sure that by the time the meeting occurs, the people at the meeting have as much information as needed to make the right decision.

You can read more about meeting logistics below, but in short, effective meetings often involve homework being done before and after; before the meeting to plan and collect information, and after the meeting to follow up on tasks assigned and issues that came up during the meeting.

Do We Really Need a Meeting for this?

Some issues are best addressed in the setting of a formal meeting, but not all! Experiment with different methods of getting things done and see which ones work best for your group. Sometimes big issues are better hashed out in **informal conversation** before they are more formally discussed in a larger meeting setting. Especially if your goal is to get work done, try putting together a **work party** where everyone is invited to work together on a task in the same

space to keep each other company and stay motivated. This can work great for tasks like flyering, sending out fundraising letters, and event invitations. After a meeting when everyone has agreed on tasks they will do, you can choose to sit down in a workspace together and get them all done individually but with your other teammates on hand if questions or issues arise. Writing documents in the setting of a meeting can be excruciating and it can be more challenging than it is worth to keep everyone engaged in these settings—try delegating the task of writing a draft to one person and asking for a few volunteers to edit it, and then present it to the larger group for approval or awareness.

More about the Logistics

- Secure a meeting **place** where there is enough room for everyone to sit in a circle and be able to see everyone else. You may need to reserve a room for a meeting weeks in advanced depending on your campus and the time of year, so plan ahead!
- Send out an **agenda** in advance of the meeting so people know whether they should attend. When sending it out, make a note of any agenda items that may benefit from meeting attendees having read certain materials or reflected on topics before the meeting. Also make it clear which agenda items are “action items” or “proposals” where a decision needs to be made, as opposed to general topics of discussion or announcements.
- Select a **facilitator** to keep the meeting moving and to direct responses toward precise topics. Facilitation is an art and we recommend finding a person in your group with experience facilitating, and/or have some or all of your group leaders trained in facilitation.
- Select a **note-taker** to record discussion points, decisions made and tasks assigned for people who are not present and also for later reflection. Consider appointing two note takers; one to record all points of discussion and as much of the meeting as possible; the other to focus on writing down tasks and items that need to be followed up on immediately.
- Create a place to keep meeting notes in an organized way. This could be a website, a wiki, a shared file server or hard drive, a file cabinet or a binder. Consider emailing out meeting notes to all members after every meeting.
- Choose a **time-keeper** and make sure they let everyone know when an agenda item is about to run out of time and forces the group to wrap it up or make a decision to extend time.
- Consider having a **white board or chalk board** at your meeting to write out the agenda, write out key points of discussion or other material that will help keep the group focused. Remember to record elsewhere any important information that you’ll want to refer to later before erasing it!
- Consider starting the meeting with **check-ins**. A check-in allows each person attending the meeting to share something; it could be how a person is doing, what's on their mind, and/or how they feel about having this meeting. Check-ins can be open or directed. A directed check-in may involve a prompt such as, “How are you feeling about your work in the co-op?” or “What do you expect from this meeting?” An open check-in can allow for members to share whatever is on their mind. For larger groups that don’t meet as often, check-ins could be limited to quick introductions (name and role/affiliation). Sometimes check-ins can also act as an ice breaker if a check-in topic allows for members to share personal information or answer a silly question.
- For meetings of individuals that meet regularly, there should be a **task check-in**. This can be coupled with check-ins. A task check-in is a summary of what a person has done at/with/for the co-op in the past week (or since the last meeting that person attended). Task check-ins are a good time for people to say what they have accomplished, what they did not, and what they hope to accomplish.
- **Announcements** can be coupled with check-ins or held as a separate agenda item for anyone who has an announcement of an event, tip, or request to share.
- The facilitator or the author of an agenda item reads and explains it, if necessary. The group discusses it. If this is an action item, a decision is made. The decision could be to approve a proposal, to direct an individual to take some action, to approve the proposal but with certain amendments, to table it so as to take more time to consider it and/or gather information about it or to simply not approve a proposal.
- When **making a decision**, the facilitator should make it clear to everyone in the meeting what decision is about to be made by restating the proposal or motion. Most groups choose to vote or reach consensus upon amendments separately from the final decision. The facilitator should always be cautious around voting on

amendments to make sure that everyone understands what is being voted on and when. Before ‘calling the question’ or taking a vote or checking for consensus, the facilitator should make sure that the group is comfortable moving forward with the decision. This can be done by asking “Are there any objections to voting on / calling this motion to question now?” If there are objections and the group works by consensus, then discussion must continue. If there are objections and the group works by voting, then a vote about whether to vote on the motion should happen to determine if the group is ready to vote or if there needs to be more discussion.

- There are various ways to **close** the meeting. Some groups prefer to simply adjourn the meeting when the entire agenda has been worked through. Some groups do a **task review**, where the person taking minutes reads off all the tasks that were assigned during the meeting so everyone knows who is responsible for each task. Some groups close with **accolades**, that is, sharing quick comments of appreciation for individuals in the group. Some groups close with **check-outs**, where everyone shares how they feel about the meeting.
- Many co-ops have a **rotating facilitator** such that every meeting is facilitated by a different member, in order to share responsibility and give everyone the opportunity to learn a new skill. Make sure that new facilitators are first trained by an experienced individual, or if a particular agenda item is expected to be contentious or otherwise complicated; appoint an experienced facilitator for that section until others have practiced this skill more. New members can be discouraged or lose focus by a poorly facilitated meeting that runs too long.

Advisory Boards

Why Have an Advisory Board?

Many community co-ops have an advisory board while in the start-up and early phases of development in order to ensure that expertise that its members may be lacking is made up for by individuals willing to lend their expertise for developing specific parts of the co-op. Sometimes organizations also have well-known community leaders sit on their advisory board simply to lend credibility to the cause by associating their name with it. This can be a good fundraising strategy if pursued. Advisory Board members are generally not involved in as full of a capacity as the main organizers of the co-op. It is especially helpful for a start-up student co-op to have an advisory board because chances are that a team of students, regardless of passion and enthusiasm, will not have all of the skills or knowledge necessary to start a café, deli or grocery store. It is also often healthy to have your advisors play devil’s advocate with the co-op’s leaders to help identify areas for improvement.

How to Create an Advisory Board

Students also often have a wealth of expertise available to them in the form of faculty, graduate students and administrators on campus. The Berkeley Student Food Collective has been able to access a tremendous amount of very helpful guidance from UC Berkeley’s Boalt School of Law and Haas School of Business, for example. Faculty in the natural and social sciences can also be helpful in developing educational programs for the co-op to enhance student engagement in food system issues.

Many regional small business associations provide free or low cost consulting to small businesses and nonprofits. Local restaurants that feature sustainable and healthy foods may be willing to share business planning advice, cooking demonstrations and recipes. Your food co-op can invite them to sit on an advisory board. You don’t necessarily have to see yourselves in competition with other cafes, restaurants, delis and groceries that feature sustainable foods; they generally may be very excited that a like-minded student co-op is opening because it increases the interest in sustainable, healthy and ethical foods in the area. This of course can be good for their business as well, as long as your two eateries aren’t offering the exact same types of foods within very close walking distance.

A well-rounded advisory board might include:

- an architect, developer, or contractor
- someone who has owned and operated a small business similar to your co-op (a grocery market if that’s your model, or a café, etc.)
- well-connected food movement leaders and/or other figures
- someone with a background in co-op management, especially a lawyer or businessperson
- someone with fundraising experience

- student government officials and/or other well-connected student leaders
- university administrators and established faculty who support your project
- any other community leaders and/or experts who share your values and want to see your vision succeed

How to Effectively Engage and Get the Most Out of Your Advisory Board

Ideally, the various members of your advisory board will have very different areas of expertise, so a co-op will generally want to contact them with specific questions accordingly. However, it may be useful to hold a quarterly (or as needed) gathering of your most involved members and Advisory Board members together to update them on the overall progress that has been made and to solicit input on some bigger picture issues that the organization is facing; such as the co-op's mission statement, location decision, organizational structure, fundraising strategies, etc. Keeping your Advisory Board members engaged and excited can lead to a snowball effect where they become even more engaged with your organization and introduce your members to other experts in the field and/or potential donors. Advisory Board members generally work with your co-op because they believe in the organization's mission and want to help. Remember to show appreciation for their time and effort!

Even if you're not actively seeking their advice, keep your Advisory Board members informed on co-op developments, even if just by sending an occasional, short and simple email. You don't want to lose touch! You want them to continue to feel connected and be able to help in the future.

Public Relations and Media

Knowing what part of your story to tell is important in reaching an audience. You're doing work that has many different positive benefits. Individuals involved in:

- food justice may want to know how the food will be sourced and what education around food systems there will be
- nutrition or cooking may want to know about opportunities to create a menu and source locally
- sustainability may want to hear about the chance to teach students about sustainability through food
- business may want to hear about fundraising and business planning that needs to be done and opportunities for leadership and impact
- cooperatives or social justice may want to hear about your democratic structure and connections to the wider co-op community
- individuals not interested in sustainability or social justice might want to hear about the venue space or delicious, affordable food

Making effective use of media is an important part of defining and projecting your public image. In general, there are two different approaches to media production. The first approach is to reach out and attract established external media entities – like newspapers, radio shows or even bloggers – to cover your group. The second approach is to create your own media. Ideally, your media strategy will use both of these approaches in complementary ways to maximize your public relations impact.

Today, the means of media production are becoming increasingly democratized and accessible to virtually anyone. The rise of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and other “new media” technologies have given co-op and collective organizations a vast array of powerful new tools for media production and communicating quickly with your community.

However, as our newly media-saturated lives may lead us to experience information overload and loss of interest, it is equally important to infuse your media creation efforts with real creativity, consistency, clarity, and purpose. As part of CoFED's support to student groups, we are offering media advisory and support services to help student food cooperatives craft and create your unique media strategy. Please get in touch with Media@CoFED.org to learn more.

2. PLANNING

Concept Design

The Basics

Before you can go around getting everyone excited about your project, you need to make sure that you understand the need that you're filling. On several campuses, startups ran into trouble when their ideas were similar to food services that already existed. Most student-run food co-ops can fit into one of three categories; **1) a grocery market** (comparable to a corner store grocery market), **2) a café** or a **3) a combination** of both. If you take the time to really examine what is needed at your campus and stick with that option, the co-op's success is much more likely. Once you've decided if your co-op is a café, a grocery market or a mixture of both, discuss the food service with your group, ranging from menu to atmosphere. Consider the limitations of the facilities, the labor you'll need and what food products are or are not easily accessible around the campus.

Addressing Needs

Consider what other needs the campus has that aren't directly food-related but could perhaps be incorporated into your co-op. Maybe your campus or a particular section of campus lacks a really comfortable hang out or study space. Maybe there are a lack of venues for student musicians, artists or for multicultural learning. Some food co-ops, like the Lewis and Clark Student Co-op, are primarily a venue space for musical and artistic performances and cultural exchanges where food happens to be sold. Consider these other needs and how they might be addressed when looking for spaces for your co-op. Meet with leaders of student organizations representing these interests to see how your organization's goals can converge.

Generating Ideas

Don't be shy about taking ideas from other student co-ops or other food businesses that are far removed from your campus. If you're in this stage of the process, take a look at the Co-op Profiles (Appendix B). You'll want to generate a lot of ideas from a variety of students, but remember that you can't open a co-op that will please everyone's preferences, so after holding brainstorming sessions and letting the ideas mature, the core group should agree upon the fundamental concept, begin articulating that concept consistently and move forward with making it happen. Now you'll be much better prepared to decide on a **location** and start writing a **business plan**, even if new information shapes and re-shapes what your group believes is a smart course of action.

Framing Your Concept

Most people who interact with your concept will judge it within a few words of hearing what it's about – it's important to make those words work for you! Here are some different ways to describe what you're doing, based on conversations about the need, figure out which words to use and get everyone in your organization to stick to them. The same thing applies for a good name for your project, if you have one.

- Cooperative Café
- Community Food Hub
- Sustainable Food Market
- Edible Classroom
- Food Co-op

Organizational Structure

The satisfaction of your members is dependent on having leadership that engages members in a meaningful way and makes decisions considering the long-term sustainability of the co-op. The decision making structure of your co-op in the start-up phase will most likely need to be different than the structure once the co-op is up and running. Many major decisions need to be made during the start-up process, and sometimes over short periods of time;

opportunities for grants and leases come up and don't always allow for weeks of communication between large groups and gathering their input. Many young and idealistic co-ops assume that in order to be a truly egalitarian and democratic organization, every member needs to be involved in every decision. It is important to acknowledge that some people involved in a start-up organization want to be heavily involved and carry a large load of the responsibility for the success of the co-op. There may also be members interested in being involved and informed but not wish to take on a lot of responsibility based on differing level of skill or other commitments.

There are two main types of co-ops that pertain to food business: a **consumer co-op** and a **worker co-op**. There is also a **multi-stakeholder co-op** type that has been successful in campus settings. The differences are mainly along the lines of membership, ownership, decision making, and labor. These co-op models can work effectively in different situations, and should be considered carefully. See Appendix V for more information.

Committees and Coordinators

Regardless of which co-op model you adopt or adapt from, tackle the work of your project by forming **committees** to delegate responsibility. This helps members stay in control of decisions made and tasks to complete without feeling overwhelmed. Committees can investigate issues or research components to major tasks and then approach the core group, board or steering committee, or general membership with a proposed course of action. This prevents painfully long group meetings that overwhelm or frustrate people and result in declining membership.

Limit decisions made by the entire organization to those related to the most important issues that everyone is likely to have input on. These issues may include:

- the location of the storefront
- the name of the co-op or organization
- the mission statement, overarching principles or values
- key operating policies that guide the rest of the organization's actions

Aside from these issues, wherever possible, delegate work to a specific committee with a clear goal of what the group will need from them.

For example, as a start-up, the Berkeley Student Food Collective has the following committees:

- **Fundraising:** applies for grants, puts on fundraising events, and teaches other members how to approach people for individual donations.
- **Policy:** works closely with legal counsel to draft and submit articles of incorporation, bylaws, the nonprofit application to the IRS, job descriptions, employment paperwork, review of lease and other formally written documents.
- **Outreach & Publicity:** recruits new members, builds relationships with other like-minded organizations and brainstorms ideas for collaboration, maintains a website, blog, newsletters, manages the Facebook page and Twitter account, and keeps the community informed on the co-op's developments.
- **Food Planning:** builds relationships with local farmers, artisans, bakers, chefs and other producers. Develops the menu, estimates cost of food, and organizes taste-tests at general membership meetings.
- **Food Sales:** run weekly outdoor local produce stand and/or sandwich stand to test out menu. Begin selling real food to generate publicity and feedback while the rest of the organization plans for the long-term.
- **Education:** develops the curriculum for educational events including a student-taught seminar, volunteer opportunities in local gardens or at other food organizations, workshops, lectures, etc. Also designs visual or physical educational materials to be presented at the storefront.
- **Membership:** maintains a mailing list, keeps track of individual attendance in order to evaluate voting rights. Also aid in guiding new members into committees and areas in which they will be useful/feel involved.
- **Storefront:** researches possible storefront opportunities and logistics (permits, access to electricity, water, gas), secures major equipment and appliances for the storefront, writes proposals or letters of intent for potential locations.

A fledgling co-op needs **strong leaders**. Some organizations that resist hierarchy to an extreme degree hinder some individuals from taking more initiative than others and this can be detrimental to making progress. An organization can have a healthy balance of strong leadership and linear decision-making power. Both in the start-up and operating phases, a co-op can implement checks and balances to ensure that these leaders are keeping the best interests of the

members at heart by setting limits to the scope of their personal responsibility. Certain individuals can be empowered to negotiate for a lease within certain financial and other parameters determined by a larger group, for example. The elected leadership or general membership can determine that they are comfortable offering a certain amount of money for a prospective location and empower one or a few individuals to negotiate with an external party, within that limit.

Democracy Gets Complicated: simple majority, super majority and consensus

Different co-ops make decisions in different manners. Most student food co-ops work by **consensus**, with just a few exceptions. The Maryland Food Collective approves proposals by a 2/3 majority in most cases. Sprouts on paper works by simple majority, but has an informal policy of working to achieve consensus at meetings. The Berkeley Student Food Collective's eight to twelve-member Board of Directors currently makes decisions by consensus but its general membership elects the board and makes other major decisions, such as the location and exceptions to the food purchasing policy, by simple majority.

The decision-making process during the start-up phase is very different from the decision-making process of an established co-op. The Berkeley Student Food Collective found that the decision-making structure of a start-up needs to allow for greater flexibility and that it was more pragmatic to instill much more power in its small board and let the rest of the membership elect the board. This was because in negotiating leases, for example, there were often a lot of decisions to be made in a short-period of time based on confidential information. Furthermore, the amount of dedication and accountability required of individuals to start a business organization from scratch was so great that it was unrealistic to expect that kind of dedication from more than a small group of individuals.

Guidelines for Effective Consensus Decision Making

Some proponents of the consensus model feel it is an important part of making the co-op **inclusive** and **unique** from other businesses. Many acknowledged that it was sometimes a **less efficient** way of making decisions but that it was important to make sure that all voices are heard and that every member of the co-op is empowered to block a motion if they think its not in the best interest of the organization. Deciding whether to operate on consensus or not is a complex issue and the pros and cons may weigh out differently depending on a particular co-op's size, culture and structure. Members of Food For Thought were trained in consensus by C.T. Butler (co-author of *On Conflict and Consensus*), which some members said was extremely helpful in adopting this method of decision-making.

"You are our CEO and our customer at the same time."
-Lewis and Clark Student Co-op Info Sheet

In order to be effective, the consensus decision-making process requires its participants to have a different mindset than in many traditional majority rules democratic processes. As Butler and Rothstein, explain, "when a group votes using majority rule or Parliamentary Procedure, a competitive dynamic is created within the group because it is being asked to choose between two (or more) possibilities." In the consensus decision-making process, members of the group need not to see each other as competitors, but rather see someone else's comfort with the decision as integral to their own comfort with the decision. Consensus decision making processes also require that individuals in the group be willing and able to practice stepping-up and stepping-back, or in other words, recognizing when they may be dominating the process too much or when they may not be contributing enough, and make adjustments accordingly. This will help prevent tyranny of the minority. We highly recommend that any co-op considering using consensus consult *On Conflict and Consensus* (available at www.consensus.net) and have new members read it or be trained in consensus decision-making by someone with experience.

Market Research

Market Research is the most valuable and pivotal step in making your concept design a business plan. The research process will generate hard numbers on market demand, strengthening your business plan by making it more legitimate and compelling. To gather meaningful data, you need to put together a survey about campus food consumer habits and what customers want and need from your co-op, and then you need to distribute it widely.

Conducting the Survey

Your survey needs to be comprehensive but brief enough that it is easy to complete. Your goal is to measure support and demand, so you should avoid questions that are not quantifiable, such as “Would like organic food better?” and instead ask questions like “How much more would you pay for organic food?” Here are some ideas of what should be included:

- How often do you eat on campus?
- How much do you spend for a typical meal?
- How much more would you be willing spend on local, organic, sustainable food?
(See *Appendix L* for a sample market research survey)

To get meaningful data, you will need to get as many people to take this survey as possible. Here are some methods of ensuring that you reach a wide base of students:

- Talk to your Student Government Association about e-mailing your entire student population.
- Announce the survey on listservs for academic departments and student groups.
- Promote the survey through tabling and flyering.

Writing a Business Plan

Businesses rarely follow their business plans exactly, but the process of piecing together this information is an important exercise for leaders of an organization in the start-up phase to make sure that all facets of the business have been thought out. Documenting these details will help structure your organization internally and key audiences that your project has a solid plan.

Business plans often contain analyses of how the new business fits into the market by using surveys of what the local community needs or desires, and what nearby competition exists. Student food co-ops can survey randomly selected students or contact a variety of student organizations for input on what food options they desire on campus and their level of concern with factors such as cost, sustainability, health, vegan/vegetarian, locally-owned, convenience, ambiance, et cetera. Furthermore, conducting a survey of what existing food operations exist on campus is essential in making sure the food co-op will offer a unique or in demand product or service.

A Basic Business Plan Table of Contents

Adapted from Cooperative Grocer Information Network's "How to Start A Food Coop", Zimelman, 2002.

1. Introduction and summary

Name, address, and contact info of business; names (and contact info) of key personnel (management and board of directors or steering committee); summary of business plan findings

2. Business description

- Statement of purpose for the co-op
- who are the members
- summary of legal form
- goods and/or services to be offered
- Industry overview; current industry trends; new products and developments; trends influencing the industry

3. Market research and plan

- Potential customers; market size/trends; competition analysis; estimated sales and projected market share
- Overall marketing strategy; pricing; sales tactics; service policies; advertising and promotional plans
- Acknowledgement of what nearby competition exists and how the co-op will meet the challenge of being profitable in light of this competition by offering unique products and/or having a strategic marketing plan.
- A market analysis that includes statistics which suggest who the typical customers will be, how much money they may be willing to spend on the co-op's products and possibly even survey results that show there is a demand for this co-op

4. Management and development plan

- Biographies of management: board of directors; key personnel and organizational chart; training needs; supporting professional services; staff needs and costs

- Organizational development: steps in developing the business; obstacles and risks; development schedule; projected costs

5. Operating plan

Location and facilities description; key suppliers and vendors; specific operational needs; equipment; basic system for staffing; analysis of critical risks. It should also include the key products and/or services it will provide, the number of staff, key leadership positions, approximate hours of operation and other such details.

6. Financial plan

Projections for profit and loss, cash flow, and balance sheet; break-even analysis; proposed financing sources and uses of startup costs. This is the section where you make the case for how the co-op will be profitable. This should include estimates of how much items are going to cost the business, how much these items will sell for, how many of these items will be sold per unit of time. Additionally, there should be estimate of all expenses, including one time costs (like construction on the physical space and permits) and regular expenses (like payroll, rent, insurance, utilities).

7. Community benefits

Professional development; service to the community; economic, social, and environmental impact

8. Supporting documents

Resumes of leadership group; letters of reference and support from key partners; copies materials and brochures; media, press, and publicity for the co-op, etc.

Also see *Appendix K* for a Business Plan Template and *Appendix L* for a Market Survey Template.

Legal Status

Most student co-ops are either student organizations that operate under the legal framework of their university, but a few are their own public benefit corporation, also known as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.

Note: co-op can be both a student organization registered with the campus as well as its own 501(c)(3) nonprofit or other separate legal entity. Discuss this possibility with supportive campus administrators.

- **Campus-affiliated student organizations**, of the legal options presented, student organizations generally receive the most support from their campus. Just as most student organizations that use office/meeting/practice space on campus don't have to pay for it (or if they do, it is heavily subsidized), these student organizations often can receive free/reduced rent based off of that precedent. Student organizations are sometimes able to place lock-in fees or other fundraising measures on the ballot in student government elections. Additionally, at most universities, student organizations registered with the campus receive some free advising and assistance with bookkeeping. Note that at some universities there are different classes of student organizations, and some campuses specifically have a class of student organization called a "student enterprise" which is a student organization designed to carry out some business activities. Examples include student-run bookstores, lounges, cafes, etc.. Every campus is unique and you'll have to do some research to find out who class of student organization fits your co-op if you choose the student organization route as the co-op's primary legal structure.

A major disadvantage of campus-affiliated or student organizations is that the lack of legal incorporation deters most all possible lenders, especially lending institutions. Additionally, student organizations often must abide by university policies that restrict certain aspects of operation. In attempting to purchase furniture for their coop, The Flaming Eggplant has faced red tape restrictions because of restrictive University contracts with furniture manufacturers. These types of contracts vary from university to university, and should be investigated before a co-op determines its legal status.

Student food co-ops that are campus-affiliated student organizations include the Flaming Eggplant, Sprouts, San Diego Food Co-op (legal status has changed over time), Earthfoods, Mixed Nuts and Lewis and Clark Student Co-op.

- **Cooperative business** is a distinct legal category of incorporation in some states, but the regulations can vary from state to state

- **Nonprofit public benefit 501(c)(3) corporations** are eligible to receive many types of grants and accept tax-deductible donations. They are also exempt from some income taxes that for-profit businesses have to pay. However, the IRS has strict parameters for what qualifies an organization to receive this tax-exempt status.
 - A co-op seeking tax-exempt status needs to make a strong case to the IRS that it either exists exclusively to cater to students and faculty or **that the educational components of the organization are so central to its purpose and day-to-day operations that it should receive this special status which most cafes, markets and grocers (including most co-ops) are not eligible for.** Basically, if you want your co-op to have this status, you need to prove to the IRS that your co-op is a lot more than just a café or grocery store.
 - Pursuing nonprofit status is sometimes costly as it requires the services of a lawyer who is familiar with nonprofit law to help properly file with the necessary paperwork with the IRS. The application fee will also run you up to several hundred dollars (the fee is different depending on how much money you have).
 - If your co-op decides to pursue nonprofit status, you will need to write Articles of Incorporation and file them with the secretary of state, then file bylaws with the secretary of state and then submit as application to the IRS for nonprofit status, which needs to include proof of incorporation at the state-level, the organization’s bylaws and Form 1023, which asks for details on what your organization does and how. The materials in the application need to make a strong case for why the organization should receive nonprofit status and a **lawyer should definitely be consulted** before completing bylaws and Form 1023.
 - Securing or being in the process of securing non-profit status is a big deal and as such it can convey the seriousness of your project as well as distinguish it as a separate operation from the university. This might be a strategy if the autonomy of the co-op is a serious concern.
 - Attaining nonprofit status takes time, so there will be a period of up to several months after you submit the application and before you hear back from the IRS. During this time you will not have 501c3 status, and may want to pursue **fiscal sponsorship**. Fiscal sponsorship is when another organization that does have 501c3 status lets you operate as a “project of” their organization, legally, and therefore can accept donations and grants on your behalf. This is helpful is before you attain your own 501c3 status want to be able to use 501c3 status to accept tax-deductible donations and grants that only 501c3 nonprofits are eligible for.
 - Student food co-ops that are nonprofit public benefit corporations include the Berkeley Student Food Collective (federal tax exempt status pending), Kresge Natural Foods, and formerly the Maryland Food Collective and the San Diego Food Co-op. Note: CoFED offers fiscal sponsorship for start-up student food co-ops. Visit CoFED.org to learn more.
- **Limited Liability Corporation (LLCs)** is the most generic type of corporation and allows for the most flexibility in terms of decision-making. Incorporation creates a legal entity separate from any of the people involved in its funding or operation.
 - The term “limited liability” means that the individual members of your coop will not be held personally responsible for legal or financial disputes that may be brought against the coop. Non-profit corporations also have limited liability protection.
 - By-laws filed with the government in the process of incorporation provide a strong backbone for the operating principles and decision making structures of the coop.

For student food coops in California seeking to create a legal entity separate from a University, **“Legal Sourcebook for California Cooperatives: Start-up and Administration”** by Van P. Baldwin provides a thorough explanation of how to become incorporated and the different options for doing so.

Writing Policies

Documenting your co-op’s rules and practices can be instrumental in both preserving institutional memory and avoiding conflicts before they arise. Because student co-ops lose so many of their more senior members very frequently, knowledge of methods for dealing with various issues—be they discipline, pricing, purchasing or otherwise—can be lost if not well documented. Sometimes in co-ops or other organizational settings when there is no pre-established procedure for how to handle a certain type of situation (especially with emotionally charged issues

like terminating someone's membership, for example), conflict can arise over how to handle the situation. Having clearly written policies for how to handle these situations can enable your member to handle the situation in a more fair, objective way, and with less time and energy spent deliberating how to do it.

When writing Policies, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the intent of this policy? Is that intent clear in the language of the policy?
- Is this policy still going to be relevant in 3 months? 3 years?
- Is this the most direct way we can address the issue that has prompted us to write this policy, and is it explained as concisely as possible? Can a new member easily understand what is meant by this policy?
- How might someone misinterpret this policy? Could this policy be used to accomplish goals that go against this or another policy's intent?
- What if _____ happens? Will it be clear what the co-op is supposed to do? *(Use your imagination here, but don't get too carried away! Good policy writers can foresee issues that might arise and make sure that their policies state objective instructions for how the co-op should handle them, rather than leaving future members to debate ambiguous statements.)*

Handbooks

Many co-ops choose to put all of their policies and other important documents and information into a handbook, which ever member receives a paper copy of or has easy access to. See *Appendices G, H and I* for examples from Earthfoods Café and Sprouts plus a template.

Bylaws (for co-ops that are independent legal entities)

If your co-op is legally independent of the university (meaning you are incorporated with the Secretary of State and have a set of Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws) then you need to notify the Secretary of State when your organization changes its bylaws or wishes to amend its Articles of Incorporation. There may be a particular procedure you must follow to notify the Secretary. All other policies can be amended internally without notifying external agents.

3. CAMPAIGNING

University Relations

It is important for co-ops to do long term planning and maintain relationships with campus administration and student government officials no matter what stage of development the co-op is in, so that as the campus landscape changes over the years, the co-op can stay current and make plans to adapt accordingly.

Existing student food co-ops have widely varying relationships with their university. Some have amicable relationships that result in generous grants and loans to the co-op, or access to low-cost or free facilities. Other food co-ops enter campus as part of a political

"Some of the people we thought were our enemies were not really our enemies; they were just different."

-Matthew Mayer, Co-Founder, Maryland Food Collective

campaign adversarial to the university's existing food contracts, such as Maryland Food Collective, Food for Thought, UC San Diego Food Co-op, and the Berkeley Student Food Collective. Some of these co-ops have been able to dramatically improve their relationships with campus administrators over time, while others would describe their relationship with their university less favorably. Some have commented that having an adversarial relationship with current university institutions may have provided these projects with the space to be more autonomous, whereas diplomacy might have pushed students to collaborate with existing food services.

Emphasizing the educational and professional training opportunities that a co-op provides to students can help win university support in the form of grants, loans, rent subsidies, advice, inter-organizational and inter-departmental collaboration opportunities, publicity, securing a good location, et cetera. Protesting university food policies or

contracts does not have to be mutually exclusive from building positive relationships with campus administrators to achieve common goals.

Arguments you can make to persuade the university administration that the co-op is worth devoting resources to:

- **Economic**
 - the co-op will provide more affordable health foods to students
 - the co-op will provide jobs and training for students (specify if you plan to actually employ students or offer only volunteer positions)
- **Environmental**
 - the co-op will provide access to sustainable food
 - the co-op will be an education space for food systems issues related to the environment
 - the co-op will spearhead sustainability on campus helping the university reach its sustainability goals. Student food co-ops have the ability to leverage peer relationships to engender a culture of sustainability even as they respond to it. Further the co-op can demonstrate the financial viability of serving sustainable foods. Many universities have committed to making certain improvements in order to reduce the campus' impact on the environment; find out what goals or commitments your university has agreed to, if any, and figure out how the co-op could help! (Many universities that have made formal commitments are part of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education: <http://www.aashe.org/>)
- **Social**
 - The co-op will be a space for building community on campus and service to the local community
 - Through the democratic process of a co-op, students engage in critical thinking and experience the responsibility of running a business.
- **Educational**
 - Students at other food co-ops have gained valuable skills from their experiences, including management, culinary, finance, people and other skills very much desired by employers.
 - Food co-ops are an avenue for people to learn more about food systems issues and to find out where their food comes from, enabling students and other customers to make more informed decisions.
- **University Public Relations**
 - For all the reasons listed above, universities can receive positive attention from the media and prospective students as a result of the co-op.

Your university's support can make the difference between feasibility or failure in some settings. However, it is important to understand how partnership with a university can be a risk to the co-op's autonomy. Research the rules and regulations governing how independent your coop actually would be as a student organization, a student business, an "auxiliary" campus unit, or as a tenant of the university (or whatever other classification they may suggest to consider the co-op). Then, negotiate clear and exhaustive terms with university administrators to prevent conflicts and power struggles down the road. Being a completely independent legal entity is also an option (see Legal Status on for more info). If possible, before making any agreements with university officials, have a lawyer look over the agreement before committing to it. Your student government may have its own lawyer who may be able to assist you, or at least refer you to one that can.

"There are obstacles to trying to be a socially, and environmentally aware business and operating under a huge institution and having to answer to it,"

-Mirisa Livingstar, Earthfoods Cafe

Universities exclusive food service provider contracts: Some universities have contracts with large corporate food service providers (such as Sodexo, Sysco, or Aramark) or in-house dining services with contracts for a monopoly on campus food. Often, the university cannot allow other food vendors on campus simultaneously. These contracts have been an obstacle for some students wishing to form a food co-op on campus. However, students at Portland State University found a loophole in their campus' contract with Aramark; the contract allows for student organizations to

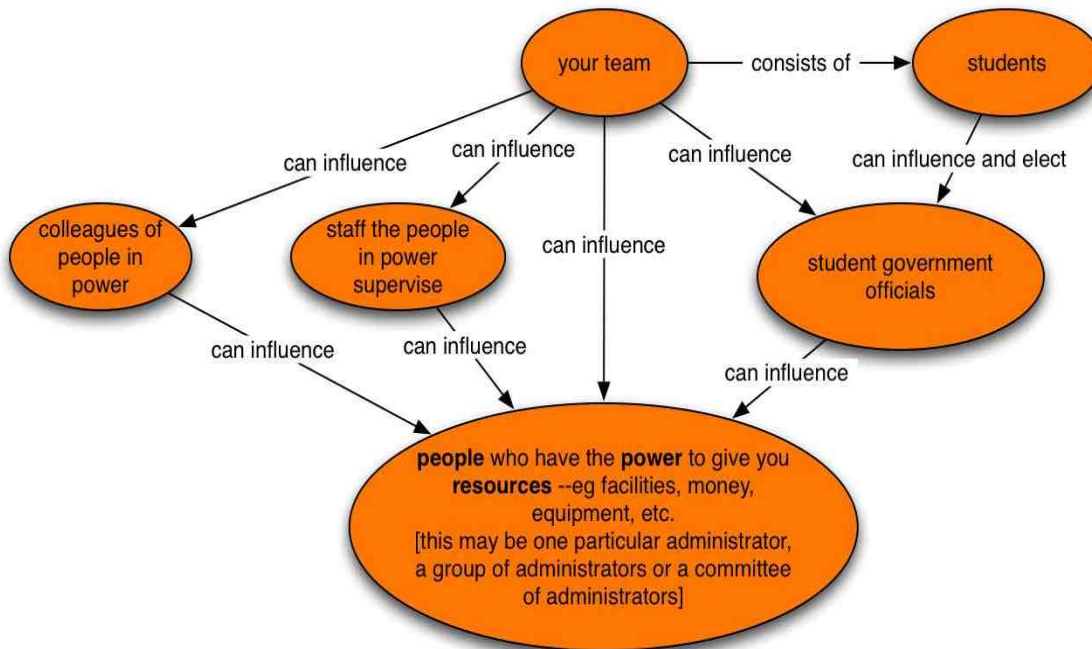
serve whatever food they wish to their fellow students. This was intended to allow for student organizations to have meeting and not be forced to serve Aramark’s food at their meetings, but under this provision in the contract, students can also operate their own café if they are a student organization and intending to serve food to other students! If your campus foodservice contract is getting in your way, check the fine print.

Power Mapping

Figuring out who in your campus administration to approach for resources – ideas, facilities, money, equipment, etc. – can be difficult, especially at larger universities with large bureaucracies. Start by doing some research on who controls what resources you’re after. Student government officials are generally trained and experienced in navigating campus bureaucracies and part of their job is to help you do just that. You should also try approaching administrators and faculty that you know, even if the resource you’re after is out of their realm – they may be able to tell you who to contact, put in a good word for you, and help you develop your ideas more before you approach other administrators that you’ve never met, or other administrators who might be more skeptical.

Some administrators you will probably want to approach include people in departments like dining/food service, facilities, sustainability office (if your campus has one), student unions/associations, property managers/real estate agents, student group advisors, and academic departments.

Some students find it helpful to organize their university administration into a power map. Here’s a simplified template of a power map. You can try drawing your own with specific names of individuals, committees, departments, et cetera. Think about who you know, who they know, and so on.



Interacting with Administrators

As you search for a location, you will need to meet regularly with campus administrators. They will be instrumental in getting you the right space.

Information is power. The more you know the more power you can assert in a conversation. Be experts in every sense and aim to know more about the topic of discussion than the person you are meeting with. Prepare for each conversation by creating a document or proposal to present as well as an agenda to guide the discussion. Doing this gives you control over the conversation and demonstrates your competence.

Request a meeting with high-level administrators only if you have the clout to call an audience with the person. You can gain tangible clout by having written statements of support from people that work under him in the hierarchy or through media attention. When you approach administrators, you want them to ideally have heard about the project indirectly already.

When talking with an administrator, no doesn't always mean no. In fact most of the no's you will receive will really mean that it will be difficult or that the admin doesn't want to deal with it. Nearly anything is possible if you have strong, visible support from students on your campus. The key is leveraging the support you have to get administrators take action.

"We walked into an AS [Associate Students] meeting with 200 people from all four co-ops and their supporters demanding one of them get debt alleviation and it really opened university's eyes to what kind of community the co-ops create on campus."

-Sarah Latoski, San Diego Food Co-op

In communicating with administration make sure students are the focal point of conversation. Matt Steele suggests, "Even if you want to form a partnership with the university, create a separate entity to reflect student power to. Having your co-op maintain operations beyond a university partnership reinforces the autonomy of the organization. This also gives you a place outside of the hierarchy of the university and thus more power in negotiating." Students should mediate or be involved in all communication between administration, campus units and departments, and outside contacts. Lastly, provide updates to all people involved. Information is power, and if you are the person informing then you maintain a place of power in negotiating.

Credibility

Meeting with administrators can be intimidating. This is a large list of issues that administrators will likely bring up. Ensure that your plan addresses and accounts for these issues, and prepare to answer questions about them.

Liability

It may be in your best interest that the university not take on any liability for the project as that provides them power to exercise over the project. This is another reason why your co-op should incorporate formally.

Most concerns with liability stem from a general discomfort with students projects. Counter liability concerns by articulating student competency for your project. You will probably have to purchase million-dollar general liability insurance yourself, which is actually surprisingly affordable and only a few hundred dollars a month. This secures the co-op in the case of any major consumer lawsuits. Note that financial liability isn't as much of a concern for most student food co-ops, because they aren't often taking on any loans or owe any investors.

In nearly all cases of autonomous student food co-ops, when in debt the co-op will restructure to deal with paying off the debt, often involving switching, at least temporarily, to volunteer labor. Financial liability is somewhat of a concern if you are launching into a large endeavor (300k or above in sales). If issues of liability become a large obstacle propose starting small and building up with either a bulk buying club, food cart/trailer or smaller café.

If you are in a situation where the university is explicitly taking on liability or that administrators you are dealing with feel as if the university is ultimately liable regardless of insurance and external incorporation status, discuss the checks you will have in place to keep the project financially sustainable and performing to the highest standards. Consider having the role of a professional adviser. Evergreen's Flaming Egg Plant model is that their adviser facilitates and empowers students explicitly and takes no part in the decision-making. The adviser has the role of maintaining the organization's stability and legitimacy. To the degree that there is liability, emphasize that student engagement and empowerment involves being forced to consider the financial liability involved. Also reference CoFED's professional guarantee to consult with the project into the future to help it avoid pitfalls. Bring in professors, graduate students, senior undergraduates, and those with project competence to support you in meetings with administration.

A co-op already exists

An existing community food co-op actually strengthens to your project because an existing cooperative can help support all of your efforts and mentor you through the start-up process. Indeed its presence is a prime reason to have

a co-op at the university there. The Food system is large and the sadly “niche” market of healthy sustainable food only has the potential to grow which benefits all of those who serve it. It is likely that the money your co-op will make will be through prepared goods, not its grocery or bulk items, so you actually occupy a different market. Additionally, it is unlikely the existing food co-op is a student focused and campus based operation.

We are too small of a school/ we are too large of a school

The size of the school just shapes what form the co-op takes. A small school often has a closer community, which actually makes supporting a community-based project more possible. At small schools like Oberlin, the co-op system is a major feature and has had dramatic effects because it is has such a strong community to support it.

Ironically many at large schools worry that because they are a commuter school they don't have the community to maintain a “community”-run enterprise. But as the small school people often fear, numbers often mean you have more opportunities to make a reasonable profit and support a large and profitable enterprise. Plus a co-op is a solution to addressing a lack of community at a university.

The form the co-op takes ultimately depends on many factors relating to each school, but each co-op should take advantage of the features of the school. If it is a small school perhaps an intimate community space (see Lewis and Clark's model) becomes the focal point of the project, which often means not operating at a huge scale.

The existing food service is already very sustainable

If there is already very sustainable food service being provided on campus, than you can make the argument that there is a market for your food. The majority of a market analysis consists of looking at the competition and seeing if people will actually consume your product. Existing sustainable food service actually strengthens your argument for how successful the project could be. Further you can make the argument that real sustainability involves food sovereignty whereby students are active participants of their food system rather than passive consumers.

Turnover

This need not be a major challenge if you anticipate the problems and plan for succession an continuity. But, there is also an upside to this issue. The co-op should be thought of as an educational experience and as such the co-op becomes an opportunity for generations of students to be exposed to food sustainability in practice as well as develop business and management skills in the context of a social enterprise. This makes the benefits of the co-op farther reaching into the greater world as a whole as graduated students go on to do amazing things in their respective communities.

- CoFED bi-annual trainings
- professional development, consulting, and advising
- Careful documentation of finances and operations
- non-student staff as managers

Why Autonomy?

Articulate food sovereignty as a crux of food sustainability. Equate any commitment to food sustainability as a commitment to food sovereignty.

Student co-ops have the ability to influence student demand just as much as they respond to it. A peer managed and owned organization's ability to educate about sustainability and social justice is much stronger than a mammoth, monopolistic food service provider. Further, providing power to students puts them in a position of both control and responsibility. Refer to precedent both on your campus and others. Your campus radio station and especially your university newspapers are likely very autonomous from the school.

Finding the Right Space

Some former leaders and members of the Consumer Cooperative of Berkeley (distinct from the Berkeley Student Food Collective), which at one point operated several grocery stores in and around Berkeley, blame the collapse of the co-op in the late 1980s on the board's faulty decisions to expand to new storefronts without adequate membership input

and thorough investigation of the prospects of these new storefronts. Choosing the right storefront is essential to the success of any retail business.

Internal Logistics

It is important to know what the co-op’s menu will be like before searching for a location. If the menu does not call for food prepared on a stovetop or grill, the storefront will not require a hood and ventilation system nor gas inputs. According to most local laws governing food businesses that make food on site, the storefront will need a hand-washing sink, a mop sink, a dishwashing sink and produce washing sink on site. So that’s a total of four sinks in most cases. Grocery stores generally need just a hand washing sink and a mop sink usually, but check with your local laws and health inspector.

Some tips on purchasing equipment

When budgeting for equipment, remember that all food facilities that serve the public need to have equipment designed for commercial use (if it says NSF somewhere on it then that’s a good sign), which sometimes means that it’s more durable, and almost always means that it’s much more expensive. Be weary of used refrigerators and freezers! They may seem like a less expensive option from the sticker price, but they may end up being more expensive and/or more hassle than is worthwhile when they break only weeks or months after you buy them. Some grocery co-ops lease major equipment like refrigerators, which allows the co-op to pay in installments, and comes with a guarantee from the leaser that they will work.

| With this equipment... | you can sell... |
|--|---|
| hand sink and mop sink | only grocery items that do not require any preparation |
| hand sink, mop sink and utensil sink | only grocery items plus hot coffee and tea and simple cold prepared food like PB&J sandwiches (fresh fruit or vegetables still not an option) |
| hand sink, mop sink, utensil sink and produce washing sink | groceries, any prepared cold food, including fresh fruits and vegetables |
| hand sink, mop sink, utensil sink, produce washing sink plus toaster oven and/or rice cooker | groceries, any cold food, and some hot food options like toasted sandwiches, pasta, grain-bean dishes, salads, etc. |
| hand sink, mop sink, utensil sink, produce washing sink plus toaster plus oven and stove | the possibilities are endless! |

Note: industrial kitchens require some other equipment not included in this table, including refrigerators, water heaters, a grease trap on the sink, paper towel dispensers, shelves that are 6 inches above the ground among other requirements.

Stoves and Ovens are nice but not necessary if funds are limited

For café co-ops, it can be really nice to have a stove and oven, but it’s not necessary, and for start-ups, this may be a prohibitive cost that is not worthwhile, at least initially. There are lots of great meals, including sandwiches, wraps, salads, drinks and other items that can be prepared without heat, or with just a toaster or taster oven. Rice cookers can also cook a lot more than just rice—you can make quinoa, other grains, beans and pasta in rice cookers too!

Remote Kitchens

Maintaining separate locations for food preparation and sales operations is not recommended because it is generally inefficient due to the extra labor required for food transport and leads to problems in inventory management. However, Sprouts at the University of British Columbia and the Flaming Eggplant Café at Evergreen State College have both operated like this for years with success, so it can be done if options are limited, but members of the Flaming Eggplant pointed to the great amount of time and coordination energy required to operate in this way as one of their greatest challenges.

Permits and Inspections

Most cities and universities have procedures that need to be followed when doing even minor construction, inside or outside of a building. Doing anything that affects plumbing, electricity or the layout of a room will likely need to be approved by a local city or university building inspector. Generally, a proposal will have to be submitted before doing the construction, which the city or university needs to approve before construction can start, and then an inspector may want to come after the work is done to ensure it was completed according to plan. **The permitting process may take longer than you think.** For example, the Berkeley Student Food Collective spent nearly 6 months securing all of the required permits for its space, and that was with a full time professional staff member on board ensuring that the Collective did not miss any deadlines and followed instructions meticulously.

A health inspector will likely need to come before the store/cafe opens to make sure everything is up to code. If possible, bring the health inspector in before committing to a space to make sure you fully understand what modifications to the space need to be made to meet your needs and abide by health

"The one group we never messed with was the health department. They were our lifeline."

-Matthew Mayer, Co-Founder, Maryland Food Collective

codes. Any facility that serves food to the public will need to have flooring made of certain material and a place for all employees (or volunteers as might be the case for your co-op) to wash their hands and use the bathroom and a separate sink for mopping the floor. If you plan to prepare food in your facilities, you will also need a produce washing sink and utensil washing sink. These all need to be separate. The utensil sink may need to have a grease trap. Different states have slightly different requirements, and depending on the nature of your food-related activities, you may or may not need to meet certain requirements. Depending on you location and specific plans, you may need to have some or all of your staff and members certified to handle food, which requires they undergo a training. This is why bringing in a health inspector long before the co-op opens to help figure out what the facilities require is highly recommended.

Before signing any lease or otherwise committing to a space, make sure you have thoroughly researched:

- all the health and safety requirements that your facilities will have to meet,
- how much it will cost you to bring the facilities to that condition, and
- what the timeline is for securing all the permits to do all the construction and doing the actual construction

Location, Location, Location

Location can be a huge factor in how many customers the co-op can attract. After the bulk of student activities moved out of the building where the San Diego Food Co-op was located and into another building, foot traffic decreased dramatically and so did sales. The San Diego Food Co-op used to pay better than minimum wage, but is now unable to pay its workers and has spent two years struggling financially.

Many Co-ops Start Small, then Expand as Customers and Revenues Increase

The Maryland Food Collective began as a guerilla sandwich stand, moved into a permanent space, and then upgraded to a larger space. Similarly, Kresge began as an informal bulk buying club which exchanged goods out of a tipi on a lawn before securing its more permanent storefront space. The Flaming Eggplant is transitioning from operating out of a trailer kitchen to a permanent space in the campus student activities building. Beginning with small-scale operations can allow the organization to test its menu, generate revenue, build a reputation and convince donors, grant foundations and university officials of the viability of the organizational model.

Strategies for Identifying the Right Storefront and Negotiating a Favorable Contract

- Do not assume the co-op will find the right storefront immediately; it may have to look for a while and/or wait until a new space becomes available
- Be realistic with what a start-up organization can handle in terms of finances and institutional capacity; many student food co-ops had humble beginnings in less than ideal locations before building up the funds and credibility to secure a bigger space
- Bring in a professional contractor and real estate agent (independent from the university) to help you determine what a space is worth and how much it will cost you to move in before making any offers to rent

- Identify supportive administrators (even if they are not the ultimate decision-makers) and ask them for suggestions on a location and strategies for winning support from other administrators
- Be persistent and politely aggressive; many universities, especially large, public universities, have large bureaucracies and securing a storefront may require many steps; find out what those steps are and follow up with administrative entities often to make sure the co-op’s proposals and plans are moving along
- Before entering negotiations for a space,
 - develop a list of questions or concerns you have about the space for the university or landlord and make sure all of these are addressed in the final contract before agreeing to it
 - decide, confidentially, as an organization what is the maximum amount of money you are willing to pay for that space any other minimum terms (such as a minimum contract length, improvements or maintenance that the landlord must be responsible for, etc.) and then delegate a few individuals to negotiate for the best deal without crossing any limits decided upon collectively
 - If no spaces typically used for foodservice are available, explore turning a non-commercial space into commercial space; the university may be more flexible with rent for spaces that would not normally generate revenue
 - Develop a plan B, and a plan C, and maybe even a plan D

4. FUNDRAISING

The Goal

As you start raising money, it is important to keep in mind your goal. Here is a break down of the rough likely costs c for a start-up effort to develop a space without existing kitchen facilities.

| Type | Total estimated cost |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Building a Kitchen | \$25,000+ |
| Plumbing and Electrical Renovations | \$5,000-\$30,000 |
| Health and Safety Inspections ² | \$2,000-\$5,000 |
| Refrigerators | \$20,000 |
| Point of Sale Systems | \$500-\$3,000 |
| Shelving | \$2,000 |
| Opening Inventory | \$10,000 |
| Staffing Costs | \$4,000-\$8,000 |
| 10% of fixed costs for 1 year | \$10,000-\$20,000 |
| Total | \$86,500-\$123,000 or more |

Strategy

How much money can a student food co-op raise?

Student food cooperatives have generally been most successful in raising funds through grants/loans from their student government, organizing a campus fee referendum and campus-based green funds. Here are some examples. The Maryland Food Collective and Mixed Nuts at Hampshire College both began in the 1970’s with grants from their student governments. Food for Thought Café at Portland State University secured \$80,000 in loans and grants from their student government in the 1990’s. The Flaming Eggplant at Evergreen State College organized and campaigned to successfully pass a fee referendum amounting to approximately \$120,000 per year that funded all of their start-up costs, including equipment and salaries, and then the campus administration allocated storage and a kitchen prep trailer to the co-op free of charge. The Berkeley Student Food Collective received a \$91,000 grant from The Green Initiative Fund (the campus green fee), plus \$10,000 from the Berkeley Student Cooperative (the local student housing

² Some universities have in-house Health and Safety Inspectors who may be able to do inspections for free.

co-op organization), plus \$5000 from another campus fund for student projects plus \$12,000 through a gala and silent auction, plus approximately \$20,000 more from smaller foundation grants, matching fund programs and private donations from friends, family and community supporters.

Consider the relative value of these fundraising strategies:

- **Grants from university and student governments:** Securing large grants (like the ones mentioned above) takes more than just writing a fancy proposal. It also generally requires that building relationships with the grant foundation/committee or your student government at least months before the grant proposal deadline. Figure out who the best schmoozers are in your group, make sure they know all your co-op's talking points and then let them loose! The CoFED website has some grant proposals that were written by other student food co-ops that you can check out. Our staff can also help you edit or draft the grant – just email us!
- Place a **funding measure** or **fee referendum** on the ballot of your student government's elections. This is when a group of students petition or convince their student government to propose a fee for a particular program, like your co-op, and all students can vote on whether they want to pay it or not. This works especially well on small or progressive campuses. The campaigning you do on this measure can be combined with general publicity and community outreach campaigns. T
- If your campus has a **green fee** (on some campuses it's called The Green Initiative Fund), your co-op might be exactly what that's meant to fund (if there's not already a green fee in place and you want to start one, see the *Raise the Funds* funding toolkit mentioned below).
- **Loans or gifts from sympathetic credit unions or food co-ops** can help push you over the edge if you already have funding. - building relationships and showing that you're credible and that your business plan is sound will be key. Credit unions need to give out loans to stay in business and a successful local co-op may be able to make a loan if there is a strong case and relationship built.
- **Grassroots fundraising:** call or write to friends and family, asking for small donations. Remember that many of these people will want to contribute to something because you are passionate about it and involved in it, even if they don't know much about food issues. If you are able to secure a matching grant through a foundation, all funds raised will count for double.
- **Host events:** the Berkeley Student Food Collective raised over \$12,000 through a formal dinner and silent auction for family and community partners, as well as smaller-scale events for students. Keep in mind that the amount of money to charge for entrance to a fundraiser should be adjusted based on what your target audience is for the event. Contact local businesses and ask them to donate food, printed materials and auction items for your event. (see the events section for more tips). You'll also want to wait to hold an expensive upscale event like this until your co-op's plans are fairly developed and you have established a good network of support among people in the community who have enough money to attend such an event. See the *Event Planning* section on page 41 and *Appendix P* for more event planning tips.
- **Memberships and pre-sales:** This can build public support before it opens and get some capital. Some businesses have actually raised a large portion of their capital from pre-selling gift cards. Membership capital campaigns are the traditional way community food co-ops are started.
- Some credit unions and student governments might be willing to make **loans**. Any of these institutions will be hesitant to give loans if you cannot provide a successful track record of raising funds through memberships, private donations, grants, or other fundraising strategies, and if you do not have a thorough business plan.

Make a timeline that includes internal goals and deadlines for grant applications. Start with the sources that are most likely to contribute and then work through the list. As soon as you have some fundraising success, every other source of funding is more likely to give to you. People love betting on a winner! For more information on setting up funding structures, see **Campus In Power's *Raise the Funds*, a fundraising toolkit**, a guide developed specifically for students trying to raise money for sustainability initiatives on their campus, including student fees, administrative and campus funds, endowments and internal and external campus banks, outside grants and alumni funds. It takes readers through a step-by-step process for seven different methods of securing funds for campus projects.

Event Planning

Events can be extremely effective at getting people to know about your co-op, building community around it and raising funds. Events range from fundraisers to music festivals to potlucks. Many co-ops choose to have an elected Event Planner who is responsible for scheduling, getting materials, finding volunteers, and running the event.

Some basic steps in event planning include:

- establish a clear primary goal for the event and make sure everyone in the organization is on board with that goal. Is it to have fun, to make money, to recruit, to get publicity, or to educate?
- brainstorm ideas: music fest, eating contest, cooking show, lecture, panel discussion, dance party, dinner party, raffle, auction, ...-a-thon, etc.
- decide on an event that is feasible, within your budget, doesn't require more labor than you have available, would attract a lot of people or at least the people you want, would make you the amount of money you are looking to raise (if the goal is to raise money), allows for publicity of your efforts, fits in your timeframe and is congruent with your group's values
- (optional) partners or sponsors for your event. An event sponsor can either be an individual or entity, and as a sponsor he/she/it does one or more of the following: lends its name to give credibility to the event, sends a speaker to the event, agrees to help promote the event and turn people out, contributes financially to the event or contributes other resources (like free food or supplies). Your sponsor may require they be part of your event planning or wish to merely support financially or with volunteers, presenters, etc.
- create a realistic timeline—it's smart to give yourself more time than you think you'll need because unexpected obstacles can come up during the planning process.
- acquire enough volunteers/staff to fill each of the necessary tasks, check in with them often to be sure the timeline is followed. Clearly communicate with all stakeholders about how much time and what contributions are expected of them, from key organizers to other members of the organization.
- be sure to secure high publicity for the event; events often require as much if not more effort to be put into publicity as is required of all the other logistics combined
- if relevant, have a contingency plan for if the weather is bad, if a speaker has to cancel, etc.
- come up with a strategy for publicizing the event and getting people to come. This should be a high priority for the key organizers of the event, but is best coupled with efforts by other members of the organization to get the word out to their contacts. Word of mouth and personalized invitations by phone are often the best method of securing attendees, but other effective methods include email, social media, flyers, radio/newspaper announcements, and other more creative methods like flash mobs and street theater.
- before ploughing ahead with organizing the event, think critically about whether the event is likely to be an effective use of your members'/staff's time based on weighing the costs of organizing it with the benefits to be earned. Ask if you have better uses for the time and money that will be invested in planning and hosting the event.

There are two major types of events — those that raise more money and those that raise more public awareness.

events that generally raise more funds and gain less public awareness and have the following characteristics:

- High individual cost to participate
- A well developed list of high-net-worth contacts
- A big name speaker, clout as an organization or other draws
- Smaller attendance
- Lower administrative and advertising investment
- More donor prospects
- Greater loyalty to the organization by those attending

Type B events generally raise visibility but may require high investment of time for the financial return to the organization and have the following characteristics:

- Low individual cost to participate
- A larger base of individuals doing outreach
- Larger attendance/higher visibility
- Higher administrative and advertising investment
- Fewer donor prospects

- Less loyalty to the organization by those attending

There are lots of books and online resources to help plan events. Here are some we've come across that may be helpful:

- Choosing the Right Fundraising Event for your Organization – <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/node/17667>
- Little Black Book: Event Planning by the YP4 Fellowship Team is an extensive resource for steps of event planning – http://www.campusactivism.org/server-new/uploads/lbb_event_plan_proof3.pdf
- Event Planning Checklist – <http://www.thegreatevent.com/content/ap.asp?id=4>
- Ideas for Group Activities, Icebreakers, Games, etc. – <http://wilderdom.com/games/>

Money Management

Bank Account

Your co-op needs a business account that multiple people can access and write checks from. Search for a Credit Union in your area as they often have the best deals and you might be able to garner some support from them as a similarly structured cooperative enterprise. For example, Santa Cruz Community Credit Union offers free financial education and savings matching for low-income people to start businesses or go to school. To find a credit union in your area, check <http://www.ncua.gov/>. If you use checks often, you may consider ordering a ledger (a book of checks with a carbon copy log used for mass check writing). Your bank can likely order some for you. If not, you may have to order from a check printing company. Yet another option is to acquire check-writing software and print your own checks. It is good practice to ask for donations on these services and software. Try to avoid using cash, but when necessary, have a money handling policy that requires a clear money trail for each transaction. For bookkeeping, consider Quickbooks.

Direct Payment

There are many companies that accept online payment that it is likely your co-op could never write a check again, such as PayPal, Dwolla, or GoogleCheckout. For fundraising and receiving donations, consider IndiGoGo, Network for Good, or Rally. Keep in mind that these services may charge a fee on transactions. Many banks also offer direct bill pay, where the money goes directly from your account to the receiver's account, similar to direct deposit payroll.

Who Has Access to the Bank Account?

It is usually most effective to have more than one but fewer than five people who have access to the bank account. If one person is sick or absent, others may still need to access the bank. Allowing access by too many people can be confusing and insecure. Be sure that former members are no longer able to access accounts as a safety measure. The people with access to the bank account will not be personally financially responsible for the funds. (i.e., if the co-op overdraws or goes bankrupt the signatories will not have to pay out of pocket) These people only act as representatives of the co-op. Make a financial director or treasurer accountable to paying bills and managing the bank account.

Insurance

Co-ops that are legally independent of the university (including those that have dual status as separate corporations and as student organizations) should purchase insurance to cover general liability, worker's compensation, employer's liability, property and probably automobile insurance (even if your co-op doesn't own a car but might from time to time borrow or rent one). These types of insurance coverage should also cover accidents involving volunteers, but check with your insurance broker. Insurance brokers are generally more helpful than insurance agents because they attend to have more expertise in this field and can shop around and they are independent of any one insurance agency, so they can shop around and compare prices and find the most affordable package to fit your needs.

If your co-op has a legal relationship with the university or any other organization (this includes landlord-tenant and fiscal sponsorship relationships) the other organization may require that they be listed on your insurance certificate as an "additional insured." The university or other such organizations may require your co-op have insurance that covers claims up to a million dollars, or some similar amount, but don't be alarmed by these large figures, because insurance

to cover claims of that amount could cost as little as a few hundred dollars per year, depending on the nature of your co-op's operations and how many people are involved.

Those that operate solely as student organizations and are not legally incorporated outside the university may not need to purchase insurance because they are covered under the university's blanket insurance plan for all student organizations. Some universities require student businesses like a food co-op to pay for additional insurance, however, since the liability risks associated with a food business may be considered higher than those for other kinds of organizations.

5. FOOD & EDUCATION

Building the Sustainable Foods Movement on Campus and In Your Community

Because enthusiasm for sustainable foods issues varies so widely across college campuses, a great first step in starting a coop is to assess the amount of interest there is in food issues by examining the prevalence of student organizations, courses, programs and other initiatives related to food politics, sustainability and social justice at your university.

It is also important to identify, early in the process, what the gap in services available to your community is, and not assume that the co-op will be really popular just because a few individuals are excited about the idea.

"The food co-op provides the campus with so much more than Wendy's ever could in terms of providing community, healthy food, cheap food. You can get full on \$2. The food is amazing, prices are more than reasonable and it's an awesome educational tool. I learned a ton working at the food co-op; a lot more than most of my classes."

-Stephanie Velednitsky, San Diego Food Co-op

If there are little to no existing student organizations working on issues that indicate an interest in food on your campus, you may have to rethink whether starting a food business is the first step you want to take; you may need to begin to **build a movement** around food issues on your campus by launching an educational campaign. Building a sustainable foods movement in your community may take multiple generations of students.

Explore off-campus community resources:

- **Approach** the Real Food Challenge and/or existing food-related organizations and departments on your campus to collaborate in building such a movement on your campus.
- **Contact** environmental, health or community development organizations in your area, to find out what kind of ideas, connections, funds or other resources they can provide.

If the campus climate seems ripe for a student food co-op, activities for building momentum include:

- **Gatherings** of representatives from student organizations interested in supporting the endeavor
- **Potluck brainstorming** sessions and other events that bring various stakeholders together.
- **Protesting** university contracts with large corporate foodservices (a note of caution: this strategy is a double edged sword because it can create an antagonistic relationship between your group and the university but it can also build momentum and support among students for the co-op, which, if framed correctly, can work in your favor overall)
- **Writing** op-eds and making YouTube videos about food system issues and how the food co-op can help address them in a local context

Food Purchasing Policies

Health, Sustainability, Fair Labor Practices, Humane Treatment of Animals, Supporting Local Farmers and other Food Politics

Most student food co-ops are founded upon progressive food policies surrounding nutrition, the environment, social justice and other ethical issues. For most co-ops, these food policies are the reason for their existence; the response to inadequate food options elsewhere on or near campus. But the nature of the policies and the way they are carried out

varies dramatically between co-ops and there's no single right way to do it. Most co-ops have a coordinator or some other officer (or sometimes pairs of members sharing the coordinator position) who are each responsible for placing orders for a category of products. For example, most co-ops have a produce buyer, a dry or bulk goods buyer, a dairy buyer, et cetera. The amount of discretion that these buyers have, however, varies greatly. Some co-ops simply have a mission statement or other pronounced principles and allow the individual who places the orders to determine which sources to use (Earthfoods, Kresge, Flaming Eggplant). Others have additional rules governing how purchasing decisions are made, such as Sprout's all certified organic and certified fair trade for imported goods rule or the San Diego Food Co-op's long list of specific rules and regulations encompassing concerns around nutrition, packaging and the environment (see *Appendix S*). The Maryland Food Collective and Earthfoods require new vendors and sometimes even individual products to be approved collectively by their members. The Berkeley Student Food Collective crafted its own 3 page policy based upon the Real Food Challenge's Criteria For Real Food (which defines real food as local/community-based, ecologically sound, humane and/or fair) and their policy calls for members and the board to weigh in on decisions when the Guidelines allow for many options or are open to interpretation (*Appendices Q and R*).

Some co-ops have food purchasing systems limited to overarching principles about sustainability and ethics, but leaving specific decisions up to the specific buyers. Earthfoods, Kresge Natural Foods, Food for Thought and the Flaming Eggplant all work like this. For example, Food for Thought's mission statement reads as follows; "Food for Thought is a student run organization that seeks to promote sustainability through our café and educational activities," and furthermore, one of the organization's stated goals is to "work with universities and businesses interested in using all or part of FFT's model to inform their own food service goals, and will challenge businesses and universities to adopt more progressive, sustainable foodservice practices." In pursuit of these goals, for example, one of their produce buyers explains he strives to buy all the café's produce from primarily Oregon and California and that he pays close attention to the food distributors he purchases from and is willing to make changes based on environmental impact of different farms that they source from. Though their food purchasing policy is similarly limited to a general mission statement, students at Kresge Natural foods emphasize that the co-op is important to them because it also creates opportunities for discussions and peer-to-peer education of various food systems issues that arise in meetings and informally around the store between co-op members and other customers.

The San Diego Food Co-op has a written food policy (*Appendix S*) which specifically prohibits the co-op from sourcing food with preservatives, GMOs, food coloring, brown sugar, white sugar, or other extremely refined sweeteners, and also addresses some issues by listing priorities, for example unsweetened products are preferred over products sweetened with fruit juice which are preferred over products sweetened with honey which are preferred over products sweetened with fructose. While some of these policies are very specific, others could perhaps be better clarified, such as the rule against purchasing foods "processed with chemicals." Overall, these food purchasing policies provide a thorough guide for food buyers at the co-op to follow without forcing endless conversations about food purchasing decision every time a prospective new product or company is considered.

In group decisions about sourcing from particular vendors, at Maryland generally one or a few members will research that vendor's history and products in regards to their environmental and social impacts and report to the rest of the co-op before the decision is made. The danger with bringing specific items, vendors or distributors up for consideration by a board or the membership is well acknowledged by the larger community co-op grocery stores (personal communication with managers with Briar Patch and Davis Food Co-ops in California and What Happened to the Berkeley Co-op contains several articles that discuss the challenges of having a board too involved with food politics) as it creates the potential for the decision-making body to become polarized around controversial food politics. However, students at the Maryland Food Collective and Earthfoods don't see polarization due to discussions about food purchasing decisions as a particularly problematic issue in their co-ops. Perhaps in a co-op with very high turnover there is less opportunity for polarity to develop. An advantage of having all members discuss a vendor or product before purchasing it is that the discussion around a controversial item is an opportunity for education and part of what makes the student run food co-op so valuable to a campus community.

The Berkeley Student Food Collective chose to adopt the Real Food Challenge's Criteria for Real Food (*Appendix Q*) as its overarching food purchasing policy. The Real Food Challenge defines 'real' food as food that is ecologically sound, fair, humane and local/community-based. The interpretation that the Berkeley Student Food Collective is using requires all food purchased to fall into the green section under at least one of the four categories, and not at all in the

red. So for example, the collective could sell a bar of chocolate if it were fair trade certified, without it needing to be certified organic, as long as it did not contain any corn syrups, hydrogenated oils or other ingredients in the red sections of the guidelines. Many university dining services are working with the Real Food Challenge to incorporate real food into at least 20% of their food (as measured in dollars spent) and the Berkeley Student Food Collective wishes to push the envelope by proving that a 100% real food system is feasible according to these guidelines. Because other institutions are recognizing these criteria and using them as a tool for their food purchasing policies, these criteria are now part of the national dialogue about food purchasing policies. Members of the collective have begun experimenting with these policies in crafting the collective's menu and testing it out through weekly campus sandwich stand sales and miscellaneous catering events, but more business planning and actual implementation of the full operations of a business that uses these criteria is still needed to assess the feasibility, benefits and drawbacks of the policy.

It is important for a food cooperative to take into consideration the social and environmental impacts of its food, since a concern for community is one of the fundamental and defining characteristics of a cooperative, according to the ICA (see *Appendix A*).

Purchasing from community-based farmers and producers

Purchasing from local farmers and producers should be a no-brainer, but in case you need a refresher: supporting local food producers is helping to build a stronger local economy, the food is often fresher because it hasn't been prematurely picked to be shipped far distances and it supports a food system that has many more food producers which means more diversity and less food safety/security crises. **Please be careful with the term "local,"** however, as many larger food business who lack sensible values have tried to misguide people about what that term means. Some foodies have taken to believing that for every extra mile a food product has traveled, the more sin there is packed into it, period. The truth is far more complex than that; food miles actually only make up a small fraction of the greenhouse gas emissions from our food systems—the vast majority come from the use of resources it takes to actually grow and process food (think fertilizer, water, pesticides) and the waste produced by livestock—especially on more industrial farms where these wastes are not recycled as fertilizer. What most foodies meant when they started using the term "local" was referring to farmers and producers of food who do not mass produce their food, but rather only sell it in the region where they produce it, and produce it in a way that is considerate to human health, the environment, animal welfare and their workers. However, many consumers have been misled to think that the specific number of miles a food product has traveled is the most important factor to consider when buying produce and that buying food that is from a shorter distance away always means it's better. The reality is that depending on where you live, the most "local" produce may not be what that term was trying to get at when it was first coined. The Real Food Challenge, the Berkeley Student Food Collective and some other food organizations are trying to use the phrases "community-based," or "local and community-based" to better clarify this concept.

"food for people, not for profit"

-Maryland Food Collective slogan

Co-ops are actually often a key customer for many local and community-based farmers. Not only can co-ops source community-based produce, but also dairy, meat, grains or bread, and many "value-added" food items (think jams, specialty pastries, et cetera.) depending on your region. Before connecting to farmers, the first step is to examine the needs and preferences of co-op customers, and what items are on the menu of the cafe. How can those needs be met, or menu items be modified, to integrate more local items?

It is important to remember that not all food is available all year long in many parts of the country. A cafe in California may be able to offer fresh, local salads all year long, while a cafe in Massachusetts during winter may be more limited to root vegetable based meals. (If your co-op is going to source food from far away for all or part of the year, you can consider purchasing fair trade and organic tropical fruits as well. The freshness and food miles are not ideal, but at least with a fair trade certification, you can know that certain community-based values were adhered to.)

The next step is to research different farms in the area. Going to a farmers market is one great way to start to get to know farms in your area. If you go to a farmers market, be sure to ask specifically where and how the produce on sale was grown. Don't make assumptions! **While many farmers markets allow only local produce to be sold,** and some allow only organic and pesticide-free produce, **other markets do permit the selling of produce shipped in from long**

distances. In these cases, the person reselling the produce is not the actual farmer. In other cases, the produce may indeed be local and organic but is sold by a contracted employee who is not the original farmer. Sometimes, farmers (especially fruit growers) may say that they use “integrated pest management,” or IPM. This refers to a system in which pesticides are used but minimized as much as possible and balanced with organic practices.

There are many online resources that list local farmers and farmers markets (see examples below). In your area, there may be a Farm To School (serving K-12 cafeterias) or Farm To Restaurant program that can connect you with local farmers. Or if your area has an existing community food co-op or natural food store, look into identifying the local farms they purchase from.

Once you have an idea of a farm you would like to purchase from, contact them to see what their procedures are for selling to stores or restaurants. Especially during the growing season, it may be ideal to set up a time when you can go visit the farm—this is highly recommended for your members who will be working in the store, so they understand where the food comes from. This will establish a more direct and personable relationship with the farmer. However, **be respectful of the fact that farmers are very busy people, and it may not be convenient for them to have you drop by at any time.** Some farms have special occasions when visitors are welcome so find out if the farm you want to visit already has special days throughout the year when they do tours. If you do try to plan your own visit to a farm, try to be as flexible as possible with when you make your visit, and offer to do a work-trade with the farmer; help out the farm with some chores in exchange for the farmers’ time taken hosting you.

In some regions, your co-op can purchase a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) share. A CSA share is when a farmer sells a share of their produce to a customer in the beginning of the harvesting season, and then provides a box containing the full variety of the harvest to the customer at regular intervals (usually once per week) throughout the season. It is a great way for customers to have access to fresh produce during an entire season and allows them to get exposed to a variety of vegetables that they would not normally purchase. A CSA share may be the perfect amount of produce for a smaller co-op. However, many CSAs do not guarantee the kind of produce that members will receive in a share, but some do allow for members to state general preferences like “mostly fruit,” for example. Most student food co-ops sell much more ready-to-eat fruit than vegetables that need to be prepared (like leafy greens and potatoes) so consider this before committing to a CSA. It is often easier to ensure a certain level of quality of taste for prepared foods in a café or restaurant if you use a consistent set of recipes and don’t have to modify them on the fly because you don’t have one type of vegetable but you do have another.

Some colleges and universities have their own community gardens or farms. Form relationships with members of those gardens or farms to find out about opportunities for purchasing produce from them. Depending on the university’s rules and regulations about what can happen with the food produced in these urban farms, your co-op may or may not be able to legally sell it, so do your some homework. Earthfoods Cafe at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Sprouts at the University of British Columbia both work with their universities’ student farms to source produce and plan their menus. Mixed Nuts at Hampshire College has experimented with purchasing a CSA share from their local farm; however, Mixed Nuts found that many customers already had their own CSA share and so produce sales didn’t increase very much with the introduction of the CSA produce.

By connecting to local farmers and vendors, ordering becomes a bit more complex because there are multiple suppliers. Remember that every farm is different, so try to be flexible and treat your community-based farmers with lots of love and respect!

Here are some online resources that can help you find local/community-based food:

- www.localharvest.org
- www.apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/
- www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/local_food/resources.html
- www.organicconsumers.org/btc/BuyingGuide.cfm

Purchasing from Large Distributors

United Natural Foods Incorporated (UNFI) and Nature’s Best are two major distributors of natural foods groceries that food businesses of many sizes purchase from. We recommend doing research to find out what unique products your co-op can source locally, and perhaps what local distributors of food products exist before placing orders from UNFI or

Nature's Best. Then, once you have a list of the harder-to-find-locally items, order those through one of these distributors. UNFI tends to be a little cheaper for most items while Nature's Best lets its customers order individual products (as opposed to a whole case) which can be handy for a small store. If your campus or nearby friendly businesses already has an account with UNFI or Nature's Best, try to make friends with them and order through their account, as these distributors give discounts to their customers proportional to how large of an order is placed.

Academic Partnerships

Gaining faculty support and developing academic programs around the food co-op can be a win-win-win. Student run food co-ops are almost always a valuable learning experience for those who participate in them, we offer here some suggestions on how to enhance, promote and organizationally benefit from that.

Student-Run Courses

UC Berkeley Students, while creating and after opening the Berkeley Student Food Collective partnered with a Professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management on campus to offer a 1 unit seminar open to all students called Berkeley and the Global Food System. The course is offered every spring semester at Berkeley and is facilitated by one or two students who design a syllabus filled with reading assignments, guest lectures discussion topics and assignments. For one assignment, students have to spend several hours during the course of the semester volunteering for a food related-organization of their choice, and the Berkeley Student Food Collective is an option that many choose, among other options, including community gardens and food justice advocacy organizations. For an example syllabus from a student-run course on food at UC Berkeley, see *Appendix V*.

Academic Credit for Holding a Leadership Position

Some student food co-ops do not generate enough revenue to pay all or most of their staff, and some co-ops choose to be run in part by volunteers in order to keep food prices low. In many cases, these volunteers can apply their experience to an academic class, either by incorporating their work at the co-op into a class project or by signing up for independent study, experiential learning or through other programs offered on campus (also see Student-Run Courses above). Giving academic credit to students for their work in the co-op may mean that they need to enroll in fewer other courses so that they can devote more time to the co-op.

Educational Programs

There are other more informal ways to make your co-op an educational space. Some food co-ops host events such as film screenings, panel discussions, community dinners and other events to raise awareness about food systems issues and encourage patronage of the co-op. Take advantage of the academic resources available on your campus to enhance such events and programs. Approach faculty members who are experts in sustainability, public health, nutrition, labor issues or other field that tie into food issues that your co-op cares about and invite them to speak at a meeting or special event, or invite them to sit on your advisory board. Forming these kinds of partnerships with faculty or departments can help you leverage more resources from the campus administration too!

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Finally, this Manual exists as a living, dynamic document. We invite and encourage you to help it evolve! Get in touch with your Regional Organizer to share your thoughts, impressions, and ideas.