

2026



Strengthening the BC Co-op Ecosystem **Summary Report**

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Presented by:
SHIFT Collaborative



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How can we work together to create an enabling ecosystem for BC co-ops to thrive?

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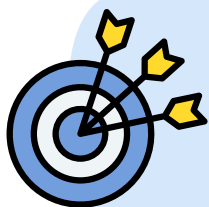
Introduction

There is growing uncertainty and instability related to the convergence of multiple trends and challenges, from climate change to geo-politics, disruption of supply chains to cost of living and housing shortages. In response, the movement toward local and regional co-operation and resilience has never been more important, and BC co-operatives need a shared strategy for their role in that.

There are growing opportunities to promote and animate co-operative solutions to many of the challenges communities are facing: to forefront co-operatives as part of the solution and potentially as a multi-solver for both (individual) ownership and control and building solutions to some of our most significant collective challenges, such as *local food supply, green and local energy, housing and healthcare*. There are already co-ops engaging around these issues and supporting local employment, supply chains and wealth building. **There is a foundation to build on and promote and grow co-op solutions across BC.**

This project, led by BC Co-op Association and funded by Vancity, set out to begin mapping the BC co-operative service delivery ecosystem, and to engage co-op actors in sense-making around strengths, challenges and opportunities linked to leadership and core services in the system. The focus was on the nature and health of co-op infrastructure or how we are working across the system, rather than on co-ops themselves.

The goals of this project were:



- ➔ Strengthen connections between co-op actors
- ➔ Share and learn to build a common understanding of the co-op service delivery infrastructure
- ➔ Identify high leverage actions to take co-op infrastructure in BC to the next level
- ➔ Engage co-op delivery agents with each other for “joined up” efforts
- ➔ Build positive energy and a sense of optimism and renewal in the sector

This report documents the process and results of BC co-op service delivery mapping and sector engagement in the spring of 2026. The report is focused on the findings of an initial ecosystem scan plus insights and ideas of sector actors for how they can strengthen the co-op sector and advance opportunities for building community ownership and wealth. The report will be used to support the identification of next steps and to animate and engage actors in taking action.

The report is organized in three parts:

I

WHAT
did we
do?

II

SO WHAT
were the
results and
lessons?

III

NOW WHAT are
the considerations
for next steps to
strengthen the
sector?



I. What did we do?

There were three phases for the project overall:



RESEARCH

The research phase of this project was short and narrowly framed due to limited funding.

Key activities included:

- research and design of frameworks for ecosystem analysis (the map),
- review of several key studies and co-op service provider websites/annual reports
- 9 key respondent interviews (*see [appendix for list](#)*) to begin to populate the ecosystem functions and development pathway maps.



ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING

A one-day workshop focused on co-op service delivery in BC

Findings from the research phase informed the design of a one day workshop for co-ops and co-op service delivery organizations.

32 people attended this workshop (*see [appendix for list](#)*): 50% co-ops and 39% service delivery organizations (including co-ops). Participants were primarily BCCA members (81%).



PLANNING TO ACTION

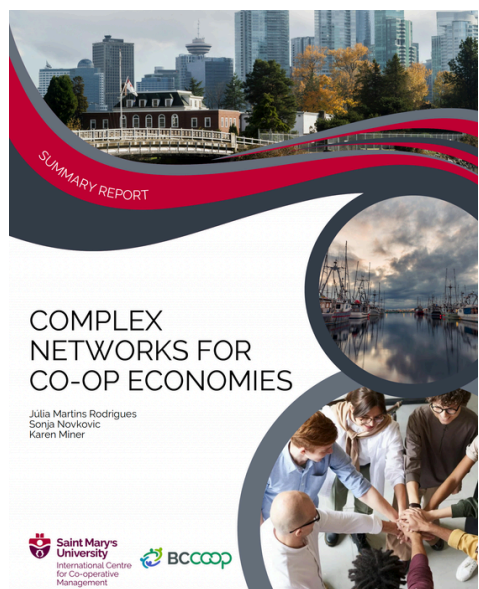
During the BCCA Conference

This report will be socialized during the BCCA conference in September, and members will be engaged in discussions that support moving from planning to action.

Frameworks for mapping the system

The co-op ecosystem sits within, and is influenced by, several larger ecosystems: small business development, non-profit organizations, the social or solidarity economy and community economic development. It cuts across every sector from housing development, to farming, renewable energy, technology, healthcare and retail. The co-op sector is complex and inter-connected. This project focused on mapping the service provider side of the ecosystem, not the individual co-ops.

In order to map service providers, the project adapted a core functions framework from the work in Complex Networks for Co-op Economies, St. Mary's. (2024)



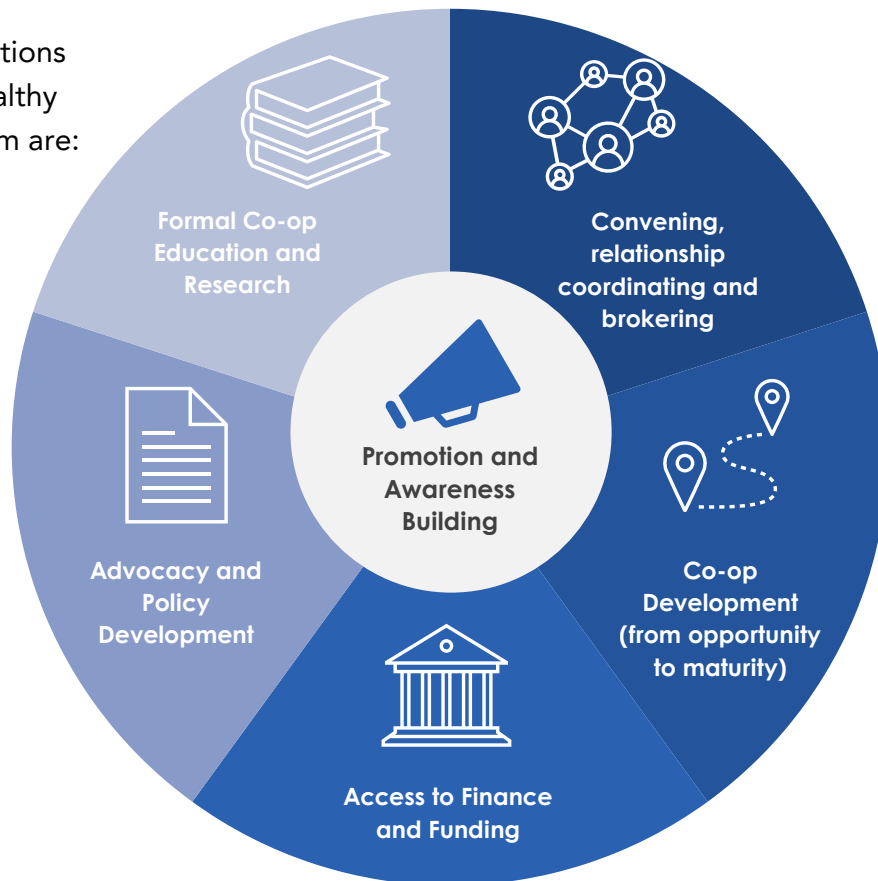
Complex Networks offered 7 core functions: technical support/capacity building, incubation/accelerating growth, advocacy, policy development, financing, convening/relationship building, education/research.

For the purposes of this project, we made three changes to that framework:

- We combined technical support/capacity building and incubation/acceleration roles into one function: **Co-op Development**. This function area includes access to information, resources, referral and co-op training/coaching from start-up to growth. Co-op Development is provided by organizations and individual co-op developer consultants.
- While Co-op Development includes supporting access to financing, **Co-op Finance/Funding** is its own specialized function area, delivered by (distinct) granting organizations and lenders. Co-op Development is also distinct from **Co-op Education/Research** which has historically been focused on formal, academic training and research activities.
- We added a new function area to capture the **Awareness Raising and Promotion** of co-ops as a distinct role that is being played.
- Finally, we combined **Advocacy and Policy Development** roles into one integrated function area.

Core functions for building a thriving co-op field

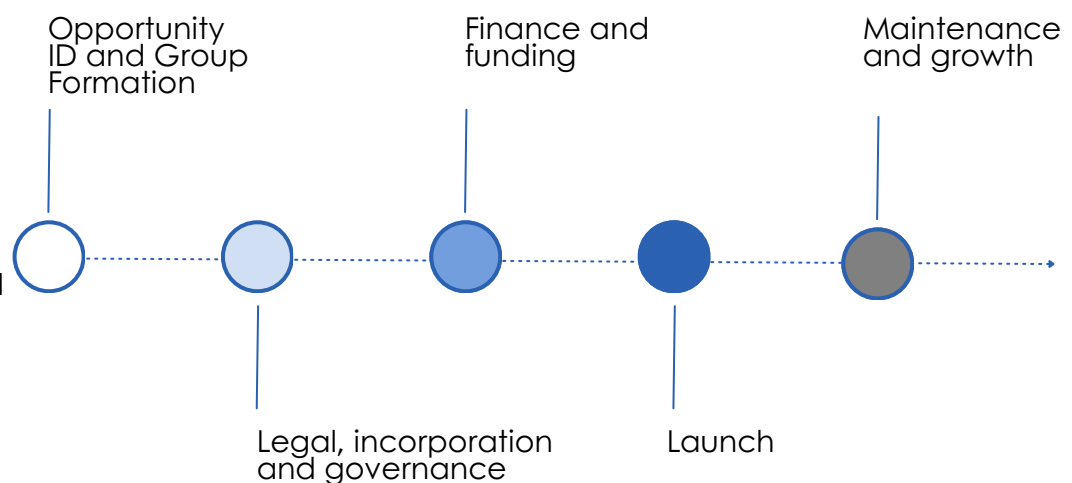
The 6 core functions needed in a healthy co-op ecosystem are:



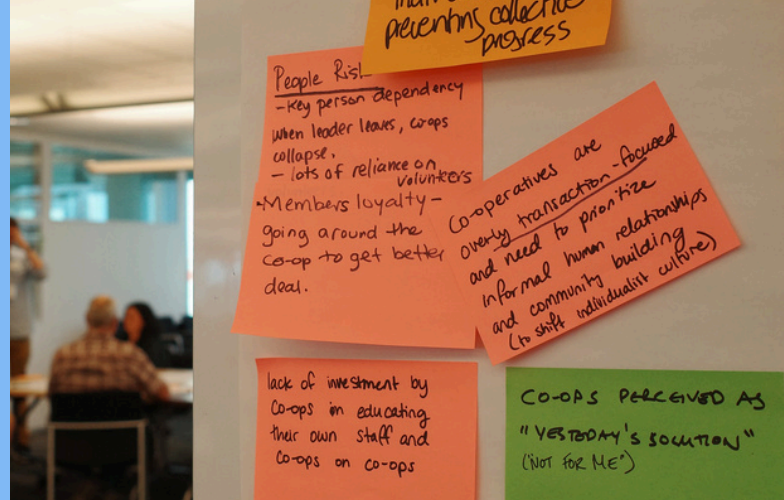
Co-op service providers address at least one of these core function areas, and many are contributing to more than one. Ideally, there is also co-ordination across and between each of these functions, where service delivery organizations are working together to build, respond and adapt services to meet the changing needs of the sector.

Co-op Development Pathway

The **Co-op Development Pathway** is useful for understanding more specifically where co-op development is well served and where the gaps are through the stages of co-op development from initial exploration through to maturity and growth. The stages are typical of many small business development pipeline or pathway frameworks.



II. So what were the findings?



BC Focused Reports

Across 3 different (BC) research/policy initiatives since 2018 (see appendix), the priorities for strengthening co-ops and building community wealth have been fairly consistent. There is a strong shared sense of what is needed. Perhaps the challenge is not what needs to happen but rather how. What is needed to make progress on long standing priorities that have stalled?



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM

Complex Networks for Co-op Economies

(St. Mary's, 2024)

- Establish a more robust institutional framework to embed policy and practice
- Leverage BC credit unions to foster deep financial integration
- Secure long term government support
- Co-create and establish co-operative networks to advance the priorities.



CORE STRATEGIES FOR

Building Community Wealth

(Royal Roads University, 2024)

- Strengthen awareness and capacity building
- Financing community ownership
- Enable public policy and legislation



PRIORITIES FOR

Growing the Co-op Sector in BC

(BCCA, Vancity, CCPA, 2018)

- Raise Awareness (value proposition and education of key partners)
- Strengthen Technical Assistance and Growth (ensure access to services, partner support, mentorships and youth engagement)
- Expand the Sector (Social, Ag, Housing and worker co-op conversions for succession)

Provincial Government should:

- Streamline BC administration
- Enable an increase in maximum amounts invested
- Venture capital tax credits
- Tax credit for indivisible reserve allocations
- Social purchasing guidelines include co-ops

Data about BC Co-ops

While the project did not focus on mapping co-ops themselves, the research revealed consistent gaps in information about co-op impacts, needs and assets across the sector. There is a need to strengthen data collection, synthesis and related decision-making.

The BC market for co-op support is small with 645 co-ops in BC:

(Co-ops and Mutuels Canada database June 2026)

- Of this, there are **260+ non-profit housing co-ops and 33 credit unions** (Complex Networks for Co-op Economies, St. Mary's, 2024)
- Nationally, Co-ops and Mutuels Canada (CMC) reports that **60% of all co-ops in Canada are non-profits**. If that average holds true for BC, there are roughly **387 nonprofit co-ops in BC** (of which 260 are housing co-ops and 127 are "other").
- BCCA membership is **110** currently



Gaps in data

There is no pooled information about the nature of demand for co-op development services, co-op assets or challenges within BC. Information exists in individual organizations or Federations, and there is some information nationally (*2025 Top Co-op Issues Survey*, Canadian Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, March 2026), but there is no comprehensive picture of co-ops in BC.

Interviews told us that:



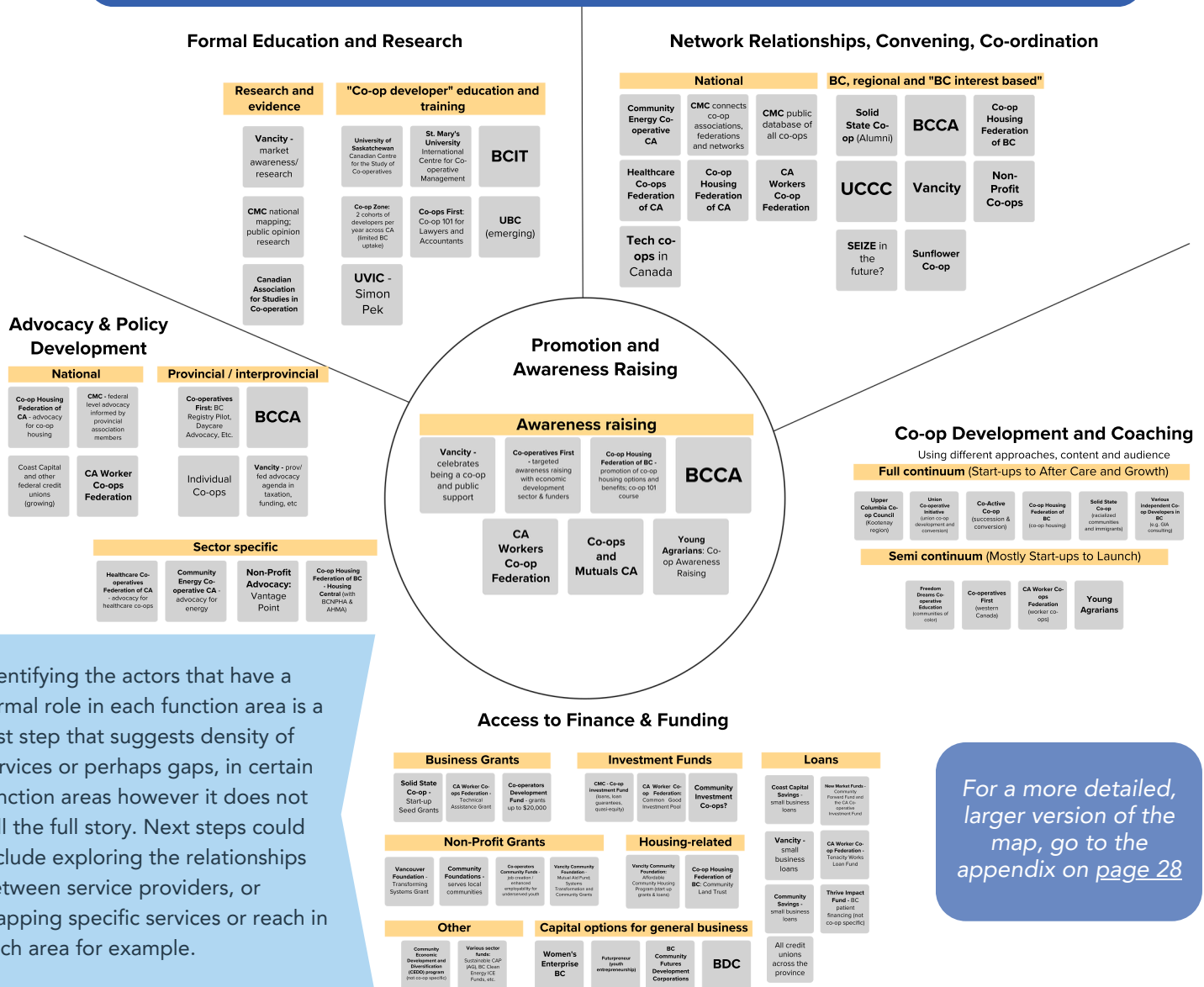
- Vancity financed about **10** housing co-ops in the last year
- Solid State starts **8-12** co-ops annually
- Co-operatives First started **9** BC co-ops last year

There is no current BC data about the sector in terms of the size, assets, age, needs, etc., of co-operatives.

This gap prevents the identification of opportunities, such as potential for co-op succession supports in an aging context, or development of financial products targeting young farmers, etc. There is hope that Co-ops and Mutuels Canada national ecosystem mapping project might be able to produce a version of their data aggregated for BC.

Mapping Service Providers across Core Ecosystem Functions

The Map of Co-op Development Services is intended to be a living resource that can be updated as new information emerges.



Identifying the actors that have a formal role in each function area is a first step that suggests density of services or perhaps gaps, in certain function areas however it does not tell the full story. Next steps could include exploring the relationships between service providers, or mapping specific services or reach in each area for example.

For a more detailed, larger version of the map, go to the appendix on page 28

The overarching finding across all function areas is that services are fragmented both within the function area and across/between function areas. This reinforces the need for convening and co-ordination services as a core function to strengthen the ecosystem overall. Service delivery actors see opportunities for their work as well as the larger sector and they want to share, learn from and collaborate with each other. However, no one has a mandate or the capacity to invest in this.



Co-op Development

Because of the diversity of co-ops themselves, there is a lot of specialization within the system. This includes dedicated services for housing co-ops and worker co-ops, co-ops with unions, and transition from business to co-op or employee ownership. While this provides targeted or tailored services for co-ops, it also creates confusion for new entrants and likely results in redundancy and duplication of efforts.

One example of this is the number of governance training and toolkits across each of the above co-op types. This is a good example of the opportunity for collaboration within one function area, that could increase both efficiency and effectiveness. The other key tension in this area is a sense of competition around costs. Experienced Co-op Developers are consultants and they charge a fee for their services. On the flip side, Co-operatives First support is free and out of province. Solid State development supports are also free, however, their focus on BIPOC and newcomers meets a unique need.

In the workshop, participants identified a need for shared back-end services to support smaller co-ops to thrive and grow. These services could include bookkeeping, human resources and legal support. Interviews support this need: respondents talked about the lack of co-op awareness and experience among these professionals as a key challenge.

Other findings in this function area include:



- *Strong front end development services and lack of a continuum of supports through the lifespan of co-ops including growth*
- *Lack of navigation or a central source of information*
- *Lack of convening and collaboration across providers*
- *Lack of information about co-op development needs*



Access to Finance

The key finding in the finance sector was that even with the products that are available, co-ops are often not ready for financing. Funders experience a lack of tolerance for debt among some (new or expanding) co-ops.

While workshop participants acknowledged the need for readiness supports, there was also a strong push back that credit unions and lenders still need a better understanding of co-ops in order to tailor products to the unique needs. This finding is also linked to the divergent purposes of investor capital (to maximize returns) and co-operative capital (meeting member/community needs). Strengthening understanding and co-ordination between development services and finance organizations could potentially contribute to more and better loans.

Other findings in this function area include:



- *Lack of navigation or central clearing house for information*
- *Lack of a shared strategy to address co-op readiness and fill gaps in capital for growth*
- *Lack of patient, flexible capital tailored to co-op circumstances*



Promotion and Awareness Raising

This is an area where service providers all contribute yet no one is holding the whole. In the workshop, participants identified the public misperceptions about co-ops and the lack of education both in high schools and post-secondary institutions as key barriers.

The lack of a shared strategy, target audiences and messaging is a gap that results in efforts scattered across the province and less effective impacts. At this time in particular, when local ownership and control are priorities for BC communities, co-ops need a shared approach to communications and promotion. This is another function area where intentional convening and co-ordination could leverage existing efforts and investment for greater impacts.

Co-op Elevator Pitch

(from interviews)

Key respondents told us that there is a need for neutral, accessible language without trying to enforce an agenda or using co-op jargon (how can co-ops meet peoples' needs: shared ownership, keeping wealth local, resilience, and people meeting their own needs together).

In general, there was a desire to emphasize the business element and avoid "social economy" or "solidarity" branding that tends to isolate co-ops as different.

“***A way for people with a shared concern to work together to solve their own problems or meet their own needs.***”

“***Co-ops are a solution to the economic, social or cultural needs of like-minded individuals — it's people locking arms in solidarity and saying let's get this done.***”

“***Practical ways for communities to own and shape the economy, keeping wealth local and delivering more inclusive, resilient outcomes.***”



Advocacy and Policy

Nationally, Co-ops and Mutuals Canada (CMC) plays a key co-ordinating and leadership role around federal policy and advocacy with provincial associations and co-op federations at the table, contributing. CMC is also a partner at the People Centred Economy table where partners advance federal social finance and other related policy.

In BC the Co-op Housing Federation collaborates with its partners in Housing Central to advance relevant policy matters, and other (national) Co-op Federations are doing the same for their members. Notwithstanding these isolated efforts, there is no BC-specific policy agenda and strategy. Interview respondents and workshop participants were united in calling for a shared approach to building and advancing a BC Policy Agenda. The need for a Co-op Act update and a better business registration process were identified as specific policy issues in the workshop.



Co-op Education and Research

Formal co-op post-secondary education and research is fairly well served in Canada (for the size of the sector). However, developers are aging and Co-op Zone has not had participation from BC in several years. There is no formal training available in any BC Universities, and BC business schools still do not include training in co-ops. While there is some national research capacity, there is also a lack of data about co-ops in BC.

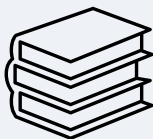
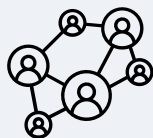


Convening, Networking and Coordination

Across all the function areas, the most pervasive gap was identified in convening and coordination. Some service providers and federations are convening their constituents, and CMC plays this role nationally. However, there is no organization with the capacity to “hold the whole” in BC. BCCA has limited capacity and has focused on supporting networking and peer learning in the last few years.

There is an opportunity to build on and strengthen this role. Convening should be strategic and based on (evolving) needs and opportunities in the sector. For example, there is an opportunity to bring early stage co-op developers together to discuss opportunities to collaborate, or convening co-op leaders to develop a policy agenda, or engaging funders. This role is focused on relationship building and proactive coordination. The overarching role of service navigation is a part of this function area as well.

BC Co-op Ecosystem Strengths and Challenges Summary

Function	Well served / crowded	Thin or missing (gaps)
 Education & Research	• National research/data institutions and data comparatively strong • Recent CMC national research could provide aggregated BC data about the co-op sector • Co-op specific academic programs exist out of province	• Lack of co-op content in mainstream business, law etc. programs as well as high schools • Co-op Zone has not had BC participation for several years
 Networking, Convening & Coordinating	• National (& Co-op Housing Fed of BC) Associations and Federations serving their constituents (Housing, Worker Co-ops, Healthcare, Energy, Wholesalers) • Co-ops and Mutual CA (links co-op associations across the country) • A renewed BCCA is stepping more into this space (as per this project) • Upper Columbia Co-operative Council (UCCC) is a strong regional networking and convening entity example	• The complexity and position of co-ops (in both business and non-profit sectors) requires intentional, proactive relationship building and weaving • In BC, there is a need for ownership and increased attention to this function and an opportunity to convene co-ops around shared challenges • See also navigation gap below, which is a core function of a co-ordinating or perhaps back bone role
 Co-op Development & Coaching	• Startup / front-end well covered through free and fee-based services • Specialists exist for a range of co-op types and development topics	• In addition to business development, co-ops require specialized supports for legal & governance in particular • The number of specialist organizations, developers can overwhelm newcomers. • BC has a navigation gap: "BC lacks a co-ordinated structure to provide curated resources to facilitate co-op formation and growth." (Complex Networks for Co-op Economies) • Maintenance/growth/aftercare gap • Mainstream business development organizations can/do serve co-ops however services are not consistent and there is an overall lack of both awareness and knowledge specific to the co-op model • Two trends to watch here: co-op developers are aging out and the tension between free and fee based consulting services for co-op development

BC Co-op Ecosystem Strengths and Challenges Summary

Function	Well served / crowded	Thin or missing (gaps)
 Finance & Funding	• Co-op Housing Financing • Start-Up Loans available • Some grant funding for for -profit start-ups (Solid State & Worker Co-op Federation) • About 50%+ of BC co-ops are non-profits seeking philanthropic grants	• Many philanthropic granters don't understand non-profit co-ops • Longstanding access to capital challenges: • Lack of patient capital • Challenges of securities limits and rules • Limited incentives for building and retaining permanent co-operative capital • The misaligned perspectives and purposes around investor capital and co-op capital, which contributes to: A perception of lack of (business) readiness among co-op finance seekers and low debt tolerance
 Advocacy & Policy	• Federal advocacy anchored by CMC and member organizations. • Federal advocacy wins: CMC and CWCF helped secure a permanent \$10 million capital gains exemption for business owners who sell to worker co-operatives, creating a meaningful incentive for co-operative business succession.	• Co-op Act modernisation needed • Lack strategic alignment among advocates • Need a bold BC advocacy agenda, strategy & alliance
 General Promotion and Awareness Building	• Everyone does some of this	• No one coordinates or curates messaging or approaches • Lack of shared targets reduces potential for impact

Co-op Strengths to Build On

Workshop participants identified a number of additional strengths or assets within the co-op sector that they could build on or leverage:

Co-op Development



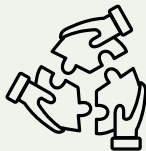
- Lots of cooperative resources exist
- A lot of (silent) co-ops that are just actively/ successfully doing their business well
- Mature mentors in the field
- Strong co-op developers

Co-op Profile and Reach



- Co-ops exist across key sectors like food, energy, housing, technology, healthcare
- History of co-ops and co-op, labour organizing in BC
- Some co-ops have influence with BC government Ministries
- Co-ops are generally viewed positively by the public, as examples of “good” businesses
- There is a growing desire for and recognition of the importance of investing in local economies and supporting local businesses

Leadership and Collaboration Potential



- Vancity – they get it
- Renewed BCCA is bringing co-ops together
- Immigration brings new ideas that can invigorate Co-op space
- Existing networks/nodes that could be “joined up” for action
- Relationships with co-op adjacent organizations that we can build on/tap into (Young Agrarians, BDC, etc)

II. So what are the insights and implications?

Overall, there is a strong sense that **the time is right** to strengthen and promote co-ops as part of the solution to challenges in communities. There is growing attention to collaboration and community ownership as important elements for healthy communities and a particular focus on transforming and strengthening our local economies for long term resilience and self-sufficiency.

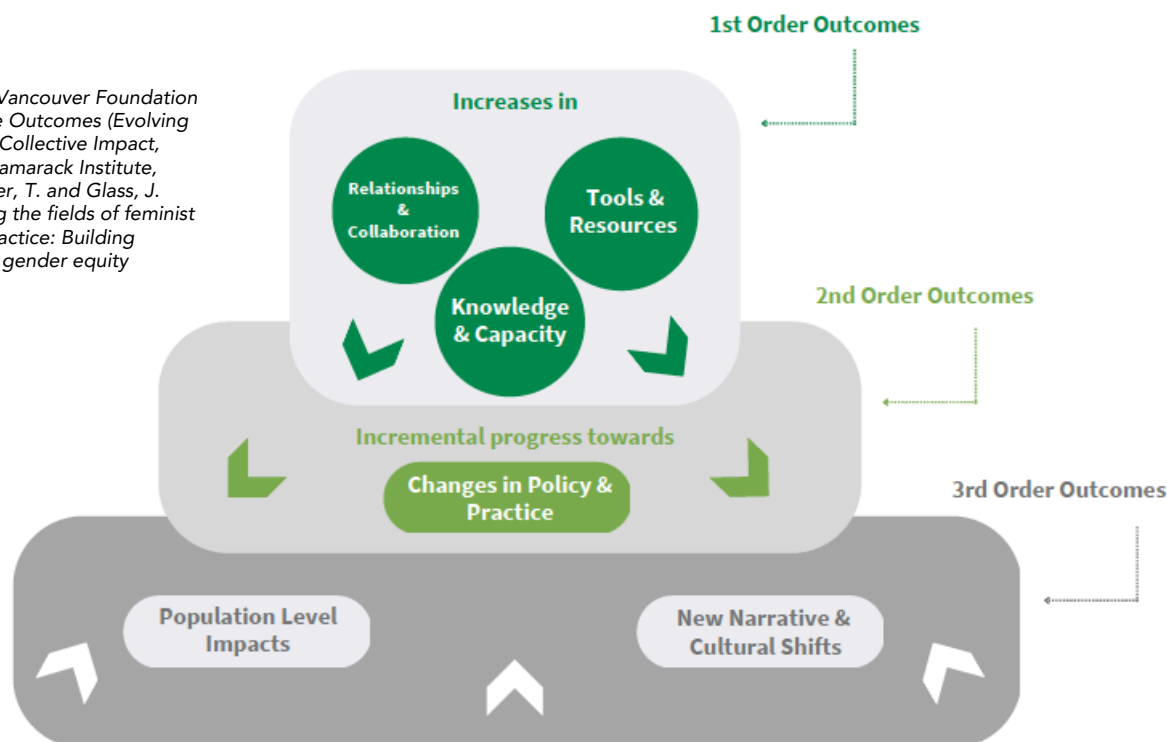
Within the co-op sector itself, there is also a renewed sense of the importance of collective action and a sense of optimism surrounding the role that BCCA is playing. Co-ops want to connect and collaborate, and while BCCA is increasingly supporting this need, their capacity to convene and co-ordinate these kinds of efforts is currently limited. Participants in the workshop were unanimous in their appreciation of the opportunity to connect and engage in conversation around these topics. The one-day workshop energized and built some momentum. Participants wanted more time to learn about each other, and more time for thoughtful planning together.

There is also a tension around time and capacity.

Co-ops want to build relationships, learn and plan together. They can see opportunities, and the imperative of a shared vision and effort – where no single co-op can do the work alone. And their time and capacity to lead or participate in new initiatives is limited. How can co-ops themselves be supported to engage and work together to strengthen the ecosystem? What could that look like? What leadership is needed to set the stage and co-ordinate?



Adapted from Vancouver Foundation System Change Outcomes (Evolving the Practice of Collective Impact, Sylvia Chuey, Tamarack Institute, 2020) and Fraser, T. and Glass, J. (2020). Bridging the fields of feminist and systems practice: Building ecosystems for gender equity



LEVERS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE CO-OP ECOSYSTEM

Where should we invest?

Systems change outcomes are also levers – or – what is needed to change a system. The diagram above illustrates a “cascading” sequence of impacts that is not always, but often, how change actually happens on the ground:

- Initial efforts have to be focused on establishing relationships, securing resources and capacity/knowledge. These are process outcomes that establish a foundation for change.
- Outcomes related to policy change and changes in practice/programs/services are then possible.
- Leading to transformation of structures, mindsets or culture around a problem.

Workshop participants were asked to consider the possible levers or interventions to improve the ecosystem.

Groups considered both what was doable or feasible, and what might have the most ripples or positive impacts within the ecosystem.

All five of the break out groups named two levers as opportunities for change:

1. **Co-op education and awareness raising** and
2. **Co-ordination of the co-op development services.**

Other levers named included:

3. **Strengthening relationships and collaboration within the sector (convening, networking and co-ordinating),**
4. **Policy and advocacy** and
5. **Access to capital.**

The achievement of the first two above, will depend on strengthening shared vision, relationships and securing resources. A formal convening/co-ordinating or backbone role will also be essential to align efforts, support and keep things moving forward. This role is also important to support co-ops to engage (given limited capacity) in meaningful ways that work for them.



III. Now what are the considerations for next steps?

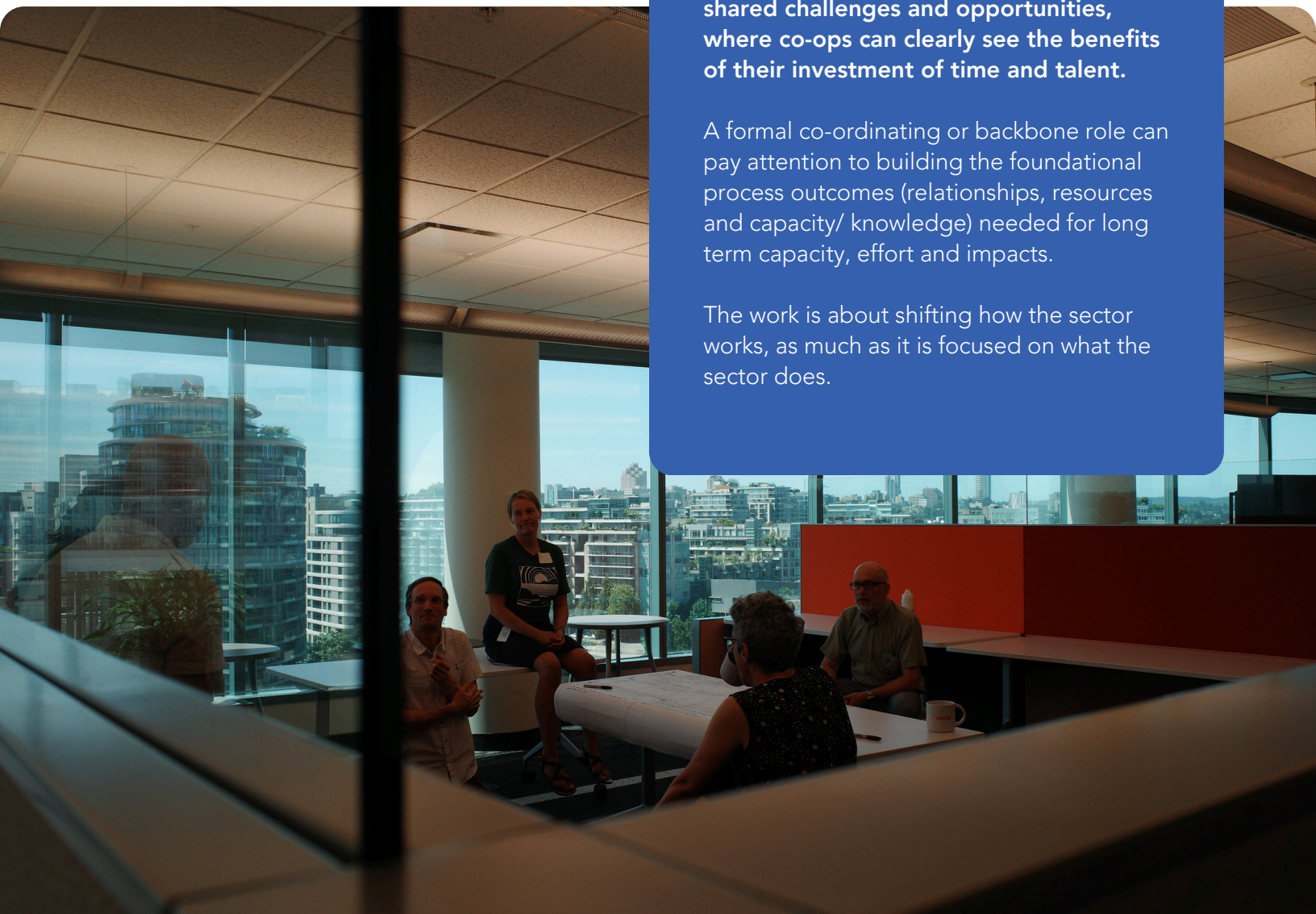
Going back to the insights from the secondary research, consider that historically the issue has not been around what needs to happen, but rather on the side of implementation. In the workshop, participants named BCCA as the lead for almost every action idea. This suggests that Co-ops want to participate or support change in the sector, but they don't feel ready to lead. This is a key challenge going forward and likely part of what has been missing in the past.

It's easy to say "co-ops need to build relationships". However, this work cannot be random or short term.

In order to work differently and achieve the persistent goals, **the co-op sector needs a long-term commitment to strategic convening and co-ordination around shared challenges and opportunities, where co-ops can clearly see the benefits of their investment of time and talent.**

A formal co-ordinating or backbone role can pay attention to building the foundational process outcomes (relationships, resources and capacity/ knowledge) needed for long term capacity, effort and impacts.

The work is about shifting how the sector works, as much as it is focused on what the sector does.

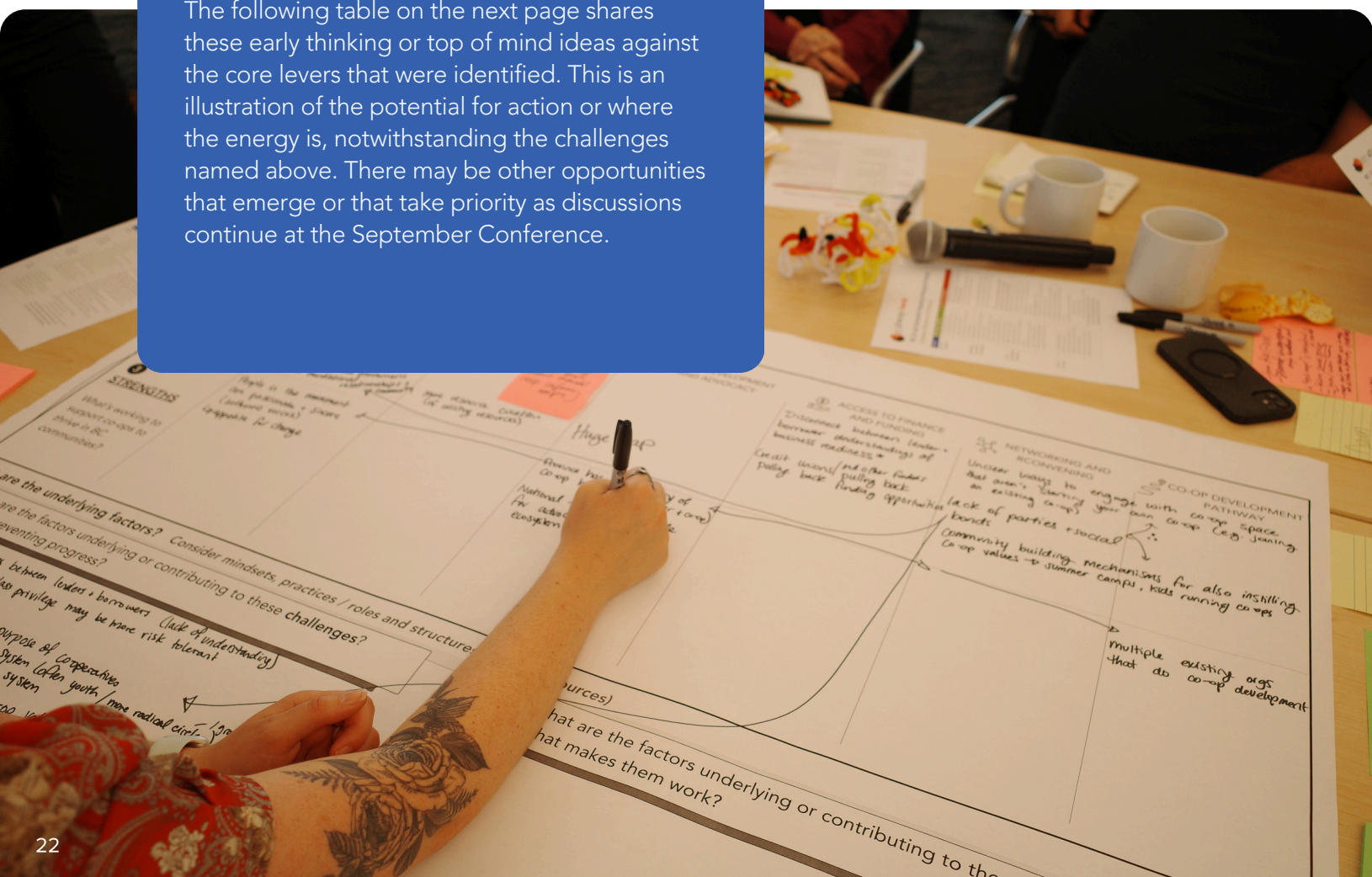


Action ideas: Food for Thought

Participants were asked to consider the specific opportunities for action around these levers and to consider where they and/or their organizations had some energy and/or expertise. Interview respondents (N=9) were also asked to name one thing they would do to strengthen the co-op sector in BC. While these ideas may not be the specific actions that get advanced, they represent the beginning of a shared sense of priorities and what might be possible.

Participants identified two priority levers for change: **Co-ordinating Co-op Development Resources** and **Strengthening Co-op Relationships and Coordination**. Both of these levers are naming the need for the co-op sector to work differently and the potential for shifts in **how** the sector works to have positive ripples across every development function. Strengthening relationships, trust and collaboration around strategic opportunities is a foundational task that requires proactive, sustained leadership. These levers and others that focus more on **what** is delivered, are explored in more detail on the next page.

The following table on the next page shares these early thinking or top of mind ideas against the core levers that were identified. This is an illustration of the potential for action or where the energy is, notwithstanding the challenges named above. There may be other opportunities that emerge or that take priority as discussions continue at the September Conference.



Potential action ideas:

Levers	Ideas
 Target Education & Awareness Raising	• Partner with Youth Excellence Society (YES) for the delivery of youth co-op education • Raise awareness and broaden the tent. Co-ops 'loud and proud' telling their stories; co-op content in BC business schools; raise awareness among the enablers co-ops actually walk into first (Community Futures, BDC, WEBC, Futurpreneur, CU's)
 Coordinate Co-op Development Services	• <i>Co-op Development Concierge</i> • <i>Co-op Capital Desk</i> • <i>Build a navigable development pathway / central clearing house. A 'one-stop portal' and navigation hub (with regional clearing houses such as UCCC) and a revived co-op-developer network, so people and referrals don't get lost.</i> • Develop shared backdoor services: bookkeeping, legal, accounting, HR • Close the aftercare/maintenance gap. A 'flying squad'-style brokered network of vetted experts co-ops can call when a problem is bigger than them. • Nurture intergenerational succession and conversion. Pair retiring developers/co-op veterans with the keen '20–30 crowd' before that knowledge is lost; • Map looming owner/director retirements as conversion opportunities.
 Strengthen Co-op Relationships and Collaboration	• <i>Convene candid, real conversations among providers. Not another 'co-learning' conference — a facilitated, safe space to clarify lanes, surface tensions and 'make the pie bigger.' The June 19 event is the obvious start.</i>
 Establish Advocacy and Policy Agenda	• Create a shared BC advocacy agenda • Align advocacy and pursue a bold provincial strategy. One coherent set of asks with big allies (credit unions, labour) • Co-op Act modernisation (treat co-ops as businesses).
 Improve Access to Capital	• Develop more accessible, patient pool of capital • Strengthen finance & investment-readiness and coordinate the capital stack. • Improve readiness pathways before co-ops meet funders; a dedicated co-op capital stack so entrepreneurs don't assemble pieces alone • Patient/'friendly' capital beyond housing

Appendices

1. Summary of Secondary Research Sources

Building Community Wealth: Royal Rhodes University & Scale Collaborative (2024)

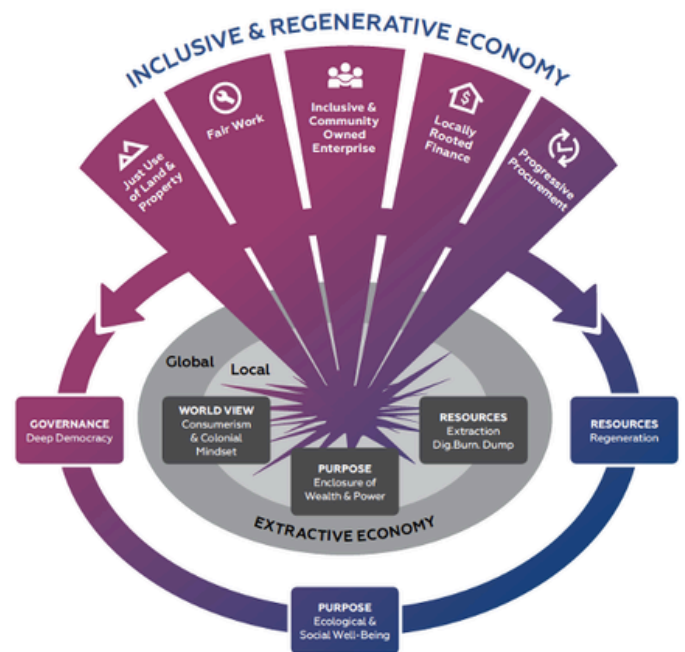
“Successful community wealth building (CWB) initiatives should be in a position to transition communities from the margins. Opportunity in terms of employment, education, health and well being has to be the goal of any CWB initiative. It’s about how you use the land and business resources you have.” (Charlie Fisher, Development Trusts Northern Ireland)

Pathways to Scaling Community Ownership:

- Strengthen awareness and capacity building
- Financing community ownership
- Enable public policy and legislation

MEANS OF ORGANIZATION	PURPOSE	AGENTS	FUNCTIONS
WHAT	WHY	WHO	HOW
Network infrastructure. Conventional ways co-ops coordinate their activities and create bonds	Needs and advantages of inter-cooperation	Enablers of complex networks	How can agents foster cooperative networks to consolidate and fortify a cooperative economy
Informal Collaborations	To leverage resources	Co-op entities as networks themselves	By providing technical support and capacity building
Co-op to Co-op Business	To reduce costs	Co-op Developers, Consultants and Leaders	By implementing co-op friendly laws and policies
Second Tier Co-ops	To align strategically	Regulators Policymakers	By representing and advocating
Co-op Groups	To provide public goods	Educational Institutions	By educating and researching
Multi-stakeholder Networks	To achieve economies of scale	Social Economy Enterprises	By incubating and accelerating co-op growth
	To spread awareness	Common Interest Groups and Civil Society Org	By convening and building relationships
		Communities of Practice	By financing
		International Bodies	

CONTEXT VARIABLES			
History and path dependence	Embeddedness and social cohesion	Co-op density	Macro culture
OUTCOMES			
Sustainable Development	Social and economic resilience	Creation and sustainability of more co-ops	Intergenerational Infrastructure



Adapted from Democracy Collaborative, 2022 and Movement Generation's Just Transition Framework

BC Summary: Complex Networks for Co-op Economies: St. Mary's University, BCCA (2024)

Priorities:

- Establish a more robust institutional framework to embed policy and practice
- Leverage BC credit unions to foster deep financial integration
- Secure long term government support
- Co-create and establish co-operative networks to advance the priorities.

Appendices

1. Summary of Secondary Research Sources

Growing the Co-op Sector in BC: BCCA, CCPA, Vancity (2018)

There are about 700 co-ops in BC, representing about 7% of BC employment, with \$2.5 billion in revenues (2015). While they can be found across British Columbia, co-ops are prevalent in the Lower Mainland, the West Kootenays and, in particular, Vancouver Island. Cooperatives that have reached substantive size include Vancity, MEC, Modo, BC Tree Fruits, Island Farms (now part of Agropur Cooperative), and the Kootenay Co-op.

On May 17, 2017, thirty-six representatives from British Columbia's co-op sector met to share ideas about how to grow the sector, to better understand challenges that co-ops are facing and to explore next steps the co-op sector can do itself as well as policy asks from government.

Co-ops need to:

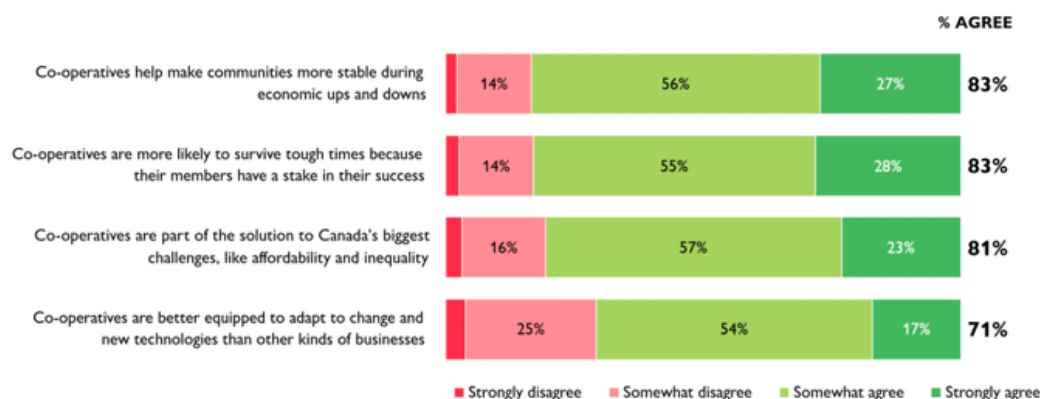
1. Raise Awareness (value proposition and education of key partners)
2. Strengthen Technical Assistance and Growth (ensure access to services, partner support, mentorships and youth engagement)
3. Expand the Sector (Social, Ag, Housing and worker co-op conversions for succession)

Provincial Government should:

- Streamline BC administration
- Enable an increase in maximum amounts invested
- Venture capital tax credits
- Tax credit for indivisible reserve allocations
- Social purchasing guidelines include co-ops

Summary Report: Public Opinion Research on Co-operatives and Mutuals in Canada, Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada and Abacus Data, (2025)

Canadians consistently see co-operatives as a stable path forward.



Appendices

2. Key levers and action ideas identified by workshop groups

Education and Awareness Raising and **Co-ordination of Co-op Development Services** were the most prevalent levers identified across all five groups. The focus of Education and Awareness Raising tended to be on root causes (such as youth education), and **Co-op Development** included suggestions for transforming practice, or how services are delivered. Without enough time for in-depth analysis, the ideas below were generated quickly. However, they still provide a sense of how these levers could actually be “pulled”, or how doable and impactful it might be to invest in any given aspect of the ecosystem.

Levers	Ideas
Education / Awareness	• Long term education pathway starting in schools onwards, Summer camps, getting them young (high school) through university • Coherent cross Co-op brand strategy • “Making co-ops the hero” - a graphic novel • Use arts and culture for awareness raising • Story-telling • Destigmatize and bust co-op myths • Strengthen Co-op zone to be graduating Co-op developers with consistent, specialized skills
Access to Capital	• Have a capital desk • Shared financing and risk mitigation • a pool of capital to secure a line of credit • Use indivisible reserves (policy) • A more accessible pool of capital → patient lending and more flexible risk modelling • Co-ops pledge % of surplus to support new co-ops • Research how existing alternative financing around the world could be done in BC
Coordinated Co-op Development Services	• Fund a ‘co-op concierge’ – a one-stop place co-ops can go to tap into the network and the resources they need (BCCA) • Shared “back office” support for legal, finance etc. • Co-op to co-op Mentorship or a “Flying Squad” of co-op experts, • Build a co-ordinated engine (business and co-op specific supports) • Co-ordination around shared services (governance!) • Connect with non-co-op business development agencies (e.g. WE BC)
Relationship within Co-op Sector	• Secure funding for BCCA to do convening (and co-ordinating) work • More sharing / networking across and between co-ops and among sectors • Gatherings like this; include everyone; build our own relationships • Strengthen BCCA relationship with members • Strengthen equity
Advocacy and Policy	• Bold North Star advocacy strategy • Partnerships with government economic development • Become a social movement, think like labour organizers, building wealth and keeping it in communities • Organizer 101 training for co-ops; community of practice to support co-ops with government relations • Build alliances with groups that have experience with organizing (UFCW, Unifor)

Appendices

3. List of participants

Key informant Interviews

1. Daniel Brunette, Co-operatives and Mutuals CA
2. Ashley Grewal, Vancity CU
3. Kelly McBride, Community Futures Central Island
4. Muryam Babar, Solid State
5. Audra Krueger and Kyle White, Co-operatives First
6. Hazel Corcoran, CA Worker Co-ops Federation
7. Jane Hope, BCCA Board Member
8. Kevin Millsip, BC Libraries Co-op
9. Zoe Creighton, Upper Columbia Co-op Council and Co-op Developer

June workshop participants

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Aaron Rideout, BCCA | 15. Jarrett Hagglund, CHF |
| 2. Andrea Harris, Vancity | 16. Kassim Jama, Solid State |
| 3. Ashley Grewal, Vancity | 17. Kevin Millsip, BC Libraries Co-op |
| 4. Audra Krueger, Co-operatives First | 18. Madelyn Read, BCCA |
| 5. Christine Clarke, CCEDNET | 19. Mandeep Sidhu, Vancity |
| 6. Caitlin Bryant, First CU | 20. Mario Cimet, Slate Cooperative |
| 7. Chris Bodnar, UFV | 21. Matt Hern, Solid State |
| 8. Chris Galloway, Solid State | 22. Michel Benoit, UFGCA |
| 9. Dawn Walker, DC Walker | 23. Michelle Stack, UBC |
| 10. Ian Anderson, Mid Island | 24. Muryam Babar, Solid State |
| 11. Inge Roecker, Air Studio | 25. Rob Baxter, VREC |
| 12. Jane Hope, Modo Co-op | 26. Shawn Bryant, Yeomen Co-op |
| 13. Jennifer Tan, Coast Capital Savings | 27. Saheed Shittu, African-Canadian
Agricultural Producers Co-operative |
| | 28. Tanya Smith, Coast Capital Savings |
| | 29. Tiffany Ottahal, Vancity |
| | 30. Tara Williams, Gia Co-op |
| | 31. Zsuzsi Fodor, Sunflower Co-op |

Appendices

4. BC Ecosystem Map (Living Document)

