

# 2016 HIGHLIGHTS



Center for Cooperatives  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## EDUCATION

Cooperative education is critical to grow and sustain a thriving cooperative sector. In 2016, the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives (UWCC) developed a range of education and professional development programs for cooperative leadership:

- Thirty-five cooperative development professionals from 18 states and the Virgin Islands gathered in June for **The Art and Science of Cooperative Development**. Co-hosted with Cooperation Works!, UWCC revamped the curriculum to address critical topics such as cooperative governance, feasibility studies, financial structures, and group dynamics and communication.
- Our **Farmer Cooperatives Conference** welcomed over 140 cooperative leaders in November to address pressing issues such as cybersecurity, strategic growth, trade, and the state of the rural economy.
- Along with Cooperative Network, UWCC co-hosted two **Co-op Directors Forums** in April and December. Nearly 100 attendees from Wisconsin and Minnesota cooperatives took part in the programs, which featured topics such as cooperative financials, legal and fiduciary duties, and governance best practices.
- UWCC was pleased to welcome delegations of cooperative leaders from Brazil in August and Canada in October for tailored cooperative education programs and tours of local cooperatives.
- UWCC educates future cooperative leadership through on-campus undergraduate and graduate classes. This fall, the UW-Madison cooperative class researched community-owned broadband for the City of Monona, as part of the UniverCity Alliance program.



Networking at this year's Farmer Cooperatives Conference



Art and Science of Cooperative Development participants



Brazilian cooperative leaders visit Landmark Services Cooperative grain terminal

## RESEARCH

- UWCC staff, the United States Department of Agriculture, National Cooperative Business Association and other stakeholders **collectively advocated and provided support for cooperative business identification in the 2017 Economic Census**. By including cooperatives in the census, UWCC will be able to identify, measure and describe the economic impact of cooperative businesses using federal statistics.
- Through the USDA-funded *Collective Action in Rural Communities: Mapping Opportunities for Cooperative Conversion and Start-up* research and extension project, UWCC **conducted a survey of cooperatives formed nationally over the past five years**. Survey results will be used to identify areas of robust cooperative activity. The project aims to better understand and enhance opportunities for cooperative entrepreneurship and develop tools to aid cooperative and economic developers in the process of starting new cooperatives. The project is fortunate to have an Advisory Group of regional cooperative development stakeholders who advise and assess research activities.

## OUTREACH

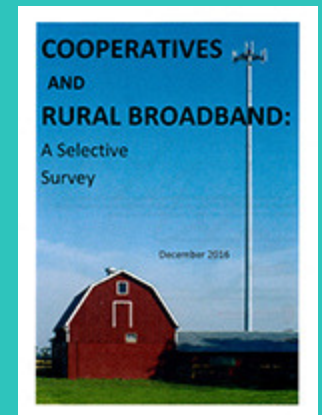
- UWCC received a **\$200,000 Rural Cooperative Development Grant** from the USDA. Together with our grant partner, Cooperative Network, UWCC will provide technical assistance and counseling to rural cooperatives, groups forming new cooperatives, and businesses converting to a cooperative structure in the Upper Midwest. The grant will focus on regional food systems, rural broadband access, senior cooperative housing, employee ownership and several cooperative education initiatives.
- UWCC provided leadership to **Madison Cooperative Development Coalition**, which is made up of nearly two dozen community-based organizations, labor groups, and cooperative developers to implement the City of Madison funded Cooperative Development Enterprise Program. The initiative is designed to promote democratic workplaces, and reduce income and racial inequalities.
- UWCC staff participated in USDA's Cooperative Law Project to help compile the **State Cooperative Statute Library**, a comprehensive, state-by-state review of co-op law. This project is providing a much-needed update and expansion of USDA's 1985 compendium of state agricultural cooperative statutes.
- Wisconsin Rep. Mark Pocan, co-sponsor of the Congressional Cooperative Business Caucus, participated in a UWCC tour of Madison based cooperatives: Just Coffee Cooperative, Isthmus Engineering & Manufacturing and Willy Street Co-op's new location on Madison's Northside.
- In collaboration with the Cooperative Development Foundation, UWCC developed a new series of **educational podcasts to help home care cooperatives** understand and address issues of governance, staff recruitment and retention, and the meaning of cooperative membership. The podcasts are a resource for new cooperative members and individuals starting a home care cooperatives, and are a resource for more established cooperatives and cooperative developers.



Rep. Mark Pocan tours Just Coffee Cooperative



UWCC developed podcasts for home care cooperatives



Cooperatives and Rural Broadband paper

## PUBLICATIONS

In 2016, UWCC published several new reports and staff papers that can be found on the UWCC website:

- "*Cooperatives and Rural Broadband: A Selective Survey*", by Lynn Pitman, Mary Kluz, and UW-Extension
- "*Exploring Cooperatives: Economic Democracy and Community Development in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin*" by Craig Borowiak, Richardson Dilworth, Anne Reynolds
- "*Worker Co-ops: FAQs about Employment Status*" by Lynn Pitman