

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR
CO-OP SPECIFIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING:**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 2017

Context

The 5th principle requires the co-operative sector to provide education and training for members, employees and to inform the public. Different education and training is needed for managers, directors, members and employees. There is a lack of clarity about where managers, directors, employees and members are getting co-op specific education or training; whether there is interest in co-op specific higher education or training, and regarding content and delivery of co-op specific higher education and training.

To address this situation, a Task Force mandated by Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada (CMC) was formed, composed of academics and co-operative practitioners, to conduct an assessment of higher education for co-operatives and from this to develop a strategy forward.

Findings

From the interviews with managers and directors, and the survey with employees and members, there is a need and interest in and for co-op specific education and training, and the current educational opportunities are not well known and are not completely filling the need. There is room for focussing and redefining educational opportunities.

1. There is no silver bullet for co-op specific education. There also is no one program, institution or course(s) that serves all.
2. All audiences are savvy consumers regarding education opportunities and want co-op specific education or training to be current, relevant and accessible.
3. They want to be inspired by the co-operative values, best practices and gain practical knowledge and skills. They are looking to co-op specific education to be a change agent that supports action, update and change.
4. The relevance of co-operative education and training still needs to be demonstrated. Participants show interest and think co-operative education and training could help their career and their co-operative, but do not necessarily feel they need co-op specific education and training to solve situations in their workplace.

5. The university as a venue is not the premier place for co-op specific education and training, even virtually. Participants want in-house/co-op sector education or training by seasoned, knowledgeable content experts with co-op experience and adult education facilitation skills.
6. There is a driving need for education or training on governance, co-op advantage/identity, and member engagement. There is a great need for practical and technical skills in these areas.
7. People involved with co-operatives want to connect in a meaningful way to their peer groups within their co-op and co-op to co-op through co-op specific education or training opportunities.
8. They want to have better co-ops, communities, employment, workplaces, skills and knowledge as a result of the co-op specific education or training. The transformational nature of co-op specific education or training has not been fully embraced or advanced enough by educators, learning institutions or co-operatives.
9. Participants are looking for innovative ideas gained through co-operative education and training in order to advance themselves and their employees, co-ops, and communities beyond traditional ideas about co-operatives and in order to be leaders in their industry.
10. There will always be people who do not want or need co-op specific education or training.

Next Steps

The Task Force will develop a Higher Education for Co-operatives Strategy taking into consideration the following suggestions:

- The diversity of co-op specific educational opportunities (i.e. individual co-operatives, federations, learning institutions, apex organizations, and networks) are important to maintain and foster.
- Universities, colleges and learning institutions may continue to offer the current programming, but should also seize the opportunity to provide education and training programs in-house (in co-ops) by offering the services of content experts, adult educators and facilitators.
- Not unlike the Credit Union Development Achievement (CUDA) program, there is an opportunity to create tracked learning journeys for managers and directors in the non-financial co-operative sector.
- Formalize a system of peer to peer networking via co-op specific education or training.
- The opportunities for more sharing between co-ops, federations, learning institutions, and apex organizations abound.
 - Centralize shared services for co-op specific education and training.
 - Share training curriculum, facilitators, examples, best practices, hubs, and materials.

For more information, please contact Fiona Duguid at fduguid@gmail.com, or Claude-André Guillotte at Claude-Andre.Guillotte@USherbrooke.ca.



DUGUID
CONSULTING

FIONA DUGUID
RESEARCHER



IRECUS
Institut de recherche et d'éducation
pour les coopératives et les mutuelles
de l'Université de Sherbrooke

CLAUDE-ANDRÉ GUILLOTTE
PROFESSOR