



# CO-OPERATIVES SERVING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES REPORT




COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS



## OVERVIEW

There are an estimated of 30 to 45 co-operatives and mutuals serving persons with disabilities or led by persons with disabilities in Canada (not including home care). An estimated of 30 to 40 are listed on the [CMC directory](#) while up to 5 are listed on provincial associations websites. Among these, it is estimated that 27% exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities while 73% serve persons with disabilities alongside other groups.

Among co-operatives surveyed which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities, two-thirds were in Ontario and one-third were in Western Canada. One-third were operating in communities with more than 1 million people and two-thirds were operating in smaller communities.



Overall, one third were in operation for more than 20 years and the remaining two-thirds were in operation from 5 to 20 years. Two-thirds operated as non-profits while one-third were for-profit.

Among co-operatives and mutuals which either exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities, 67% indicated that they serve persons with disabilities exclusively while 33% claimed they primarily serve persons with disabilities. 50% are majority led by persons with disabilities.

Overall, 67% of co-operatives and mutuals which either exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities indicated that their revenues were under \$250,000. The remaining 33% were \$250,000 or above. On average, co-operatives and mutuals exclusively or mostly serving persons with disabilities reported that 23% of their annual funding was derived from government.

Among leaders representing organizations exclusively or mostly serving persons with disabilities, 33% indicated the organization was led primarily by paid staff and none said it was primarily led by volunteers. The remaining 67% were led by a combination.

When questioned regarding challenges facing their organization, responses varied considerably. Challenges faced by these organizations included obtaining more government funding, marketing, fundraising, finding suppliers, and succession planning.

The leadership survey asked specific questions to gauge co-operatives and mutuals priorities corresponding with the Government of Canada's Investment Readiness Program.





Leaders of organizations which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities were asked to rate their organization's priorities regarding developing new products, finding new markets, developing business plans, and finding technical expertise.

Three sample co-operatives and mutuals serving persons with disabilities are featured at the end of the report.





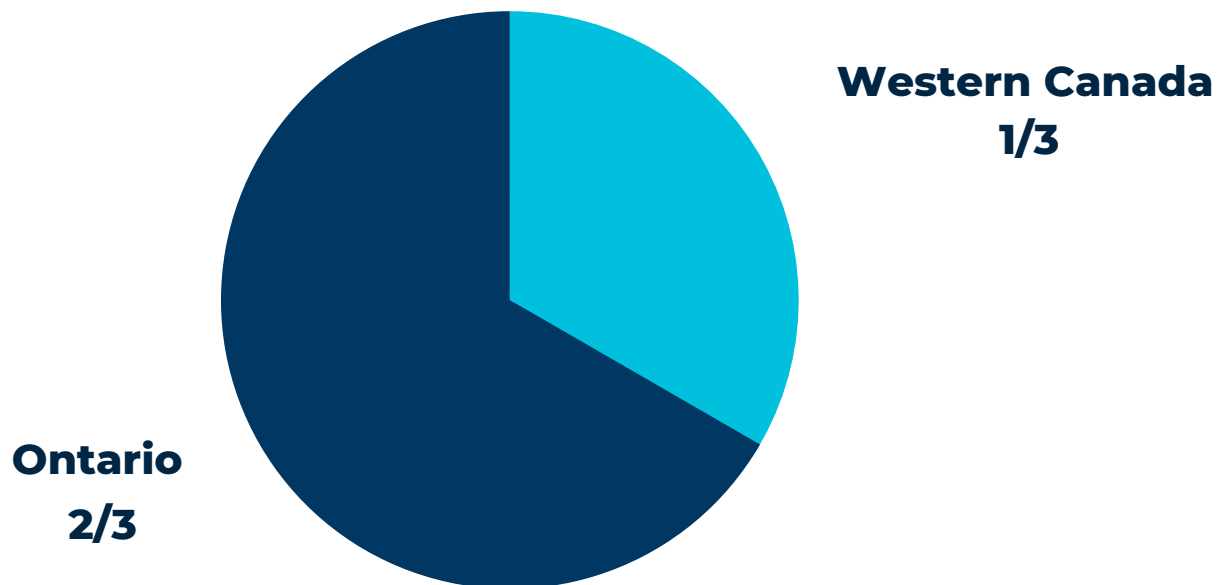
# RESEARCH

## Number of co-operatives

Community Researchers conducted a review of the [Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada online directory](#) and each of the Canadian provincial co-operative associations. The review determined that there are an estimated 30 to 45 co-operatives serving persons with disabilities or led by persons with disabilities (other than home care).

It is estimated that of 30 to 40 of the co-operatives serving persons with disabilities were listed on the CMC directory while fewer than 5 were listed as members on provincial associations websites. A subsequent survey of co-operative leaders across Canada determined that among co-operatives and mutuals serving persons with disabilities, 27% exclusively or mostly served persons with disabilities while 73% indicated they served persons with disabilities alongside other groups. The remaining analysis in this segment report only considers data from co-operatives that either exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities.

## Location

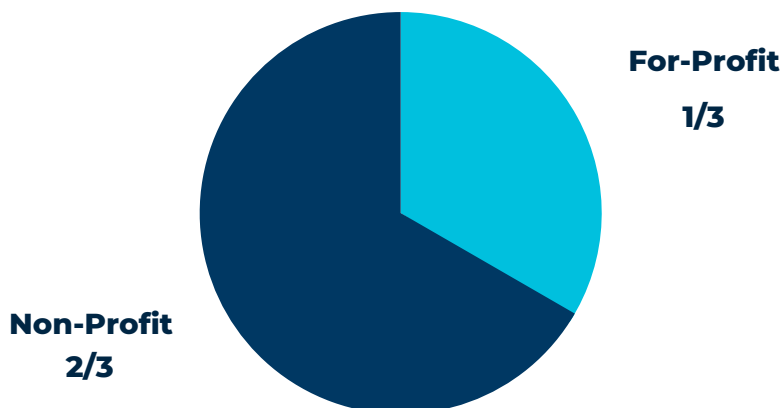


The leadership survey asked respondents to describe their location and the community size in which they serve. Among co-operatives and mutuals surveyed which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities, two-thirds were in Ontario and one-third were in Western Canada. Among co-operatives and mutuals surveyed which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities, one-third were operating in communities with more than 1 million people and two-thirds were operating in smaller communities.





## Status and Lifetime



The leadership survey asked respondents to describe certain parameters of their organization including years in operation and their business structure. Overall, among co-operatives and mutuals surveyed which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities, one third were in operation for more than 20 years. The remaining two-thirds were in operation from 5 to 20 years. Among co-operatives and mutuals surveyed which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities, two-thirds operated as non-profits while one-third were for-profit.

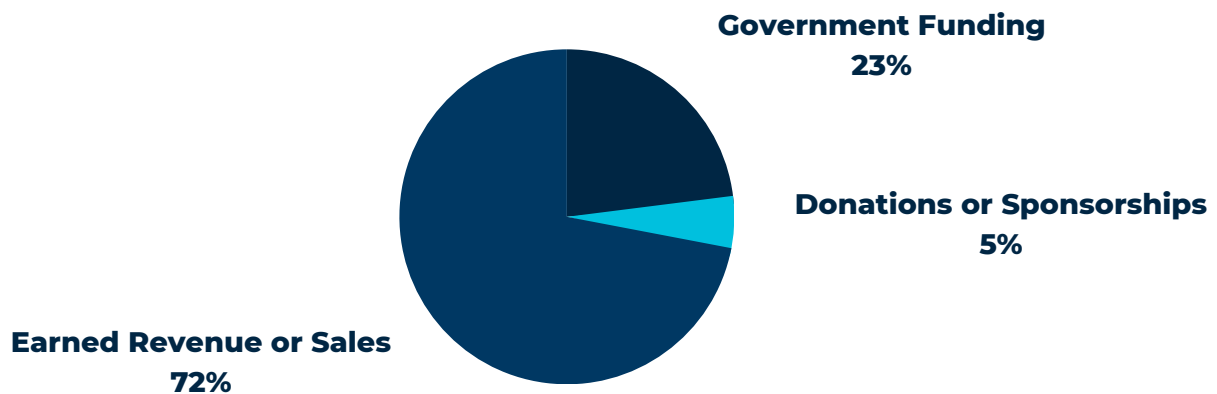
## Mission

Respondents to the leadership survey were asked the extent to which their organization served persons with disabilities and the extent to which their organization was led by persons with disabilities. Among co-operatives and mutuals which either exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities, 67% indicated that they serve persons with disabilities exclusively while 33% claimed they primarily serve persons with disabilities.

According to the survey, 50% of co-operatives and mutuals which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities are majority led by persons with disabilities. The remaining 50% had a minority of their leadership as persons with disabilities.

## Revenue and funding

Respondents to the leadership survey were questioned regarding their organization's annual revenues, along with the proportion of revenues generated through earned revenue or sales, donations and corporate partnerships, and government funding. Overall, 67% of co-operatives and mutuals which either exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities indicated that their revenues were under \$250,000. The remaining 33% were \$250,000 or above. None of the survey respondents which exclusively or mostly served persons with disabilities reported revenues of more than \$500,000.

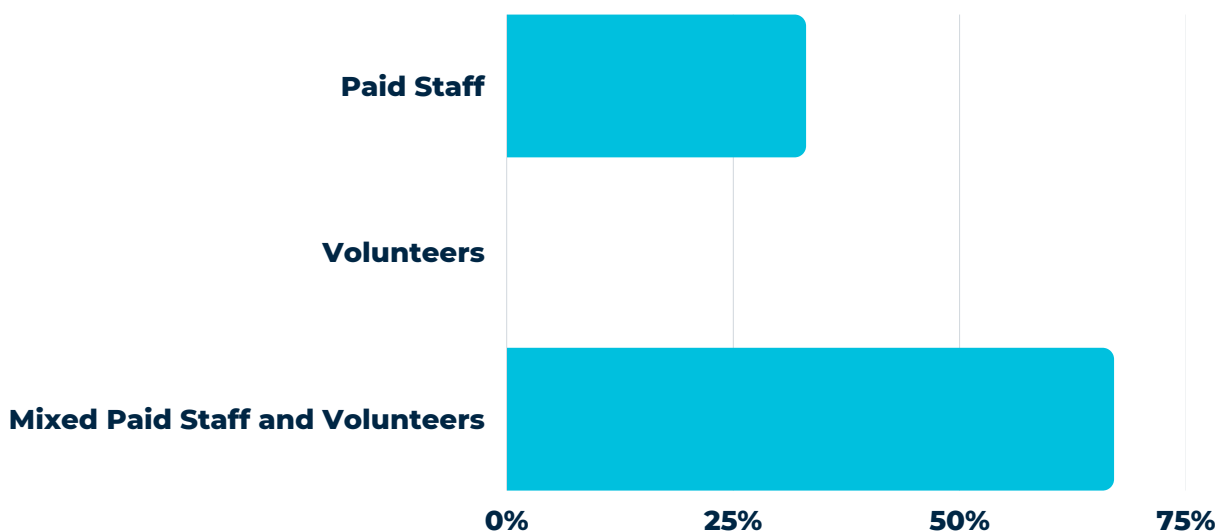


On average, co-operatives and mutuals exclusively or mostly serving persons with disabilities reported that 23% of their annual funding was derived from government funding. On average, leaders representing these organizations indicated that 5% of their revenues were from donations or corporate sponsorships. The average amount of revenue from earned revenues or sales was 72%.





## Leadership and challenges

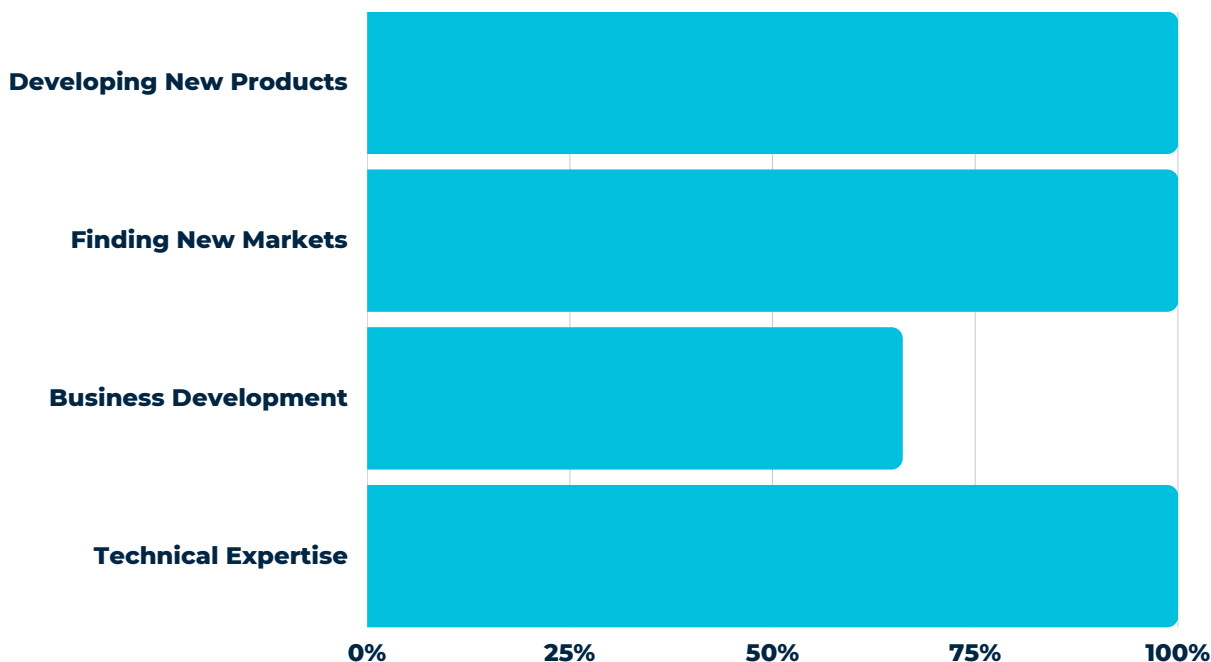


Respondents to the leadership survey shared whether their leadership was primarily managed by paid staff, volunteers, or a combination. Additionally, an open-ended question asked leaders to describe the top two challenges facing their organization. Among leaders representing co-operatives and mutuals either exclusively or mostly serving persons with disabilities, 33% indicated the organization was led primarily by paid staff and none said it was primarily led by volunteers. The remaining 67% of respondents indicated that their organization was led by a combination of paid staff and volunteers. When questioned regarding challenges facing their organization, responses varied considerably. Challenges faced by these organizations included obtaining more government funding, marketing, fundraising, finding suppliers, and succession planning.



## Organizational priorities

The leadership survey asked specific questions to gauge co-operatives and mutuals priorities corresponding with the Government of Canada's Investment Readiness Program. Leaders of organizations which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities were asked to rate their organization's priorities regarding developing new products, finding new markets, developing business plans, and finding technical expertise.



In total, 100% of co-operatives and mutuals which exclusively or mostly serve persons with disabilities indicated that developing new products was a priority. 33% claimed that it was high priority while 67% said it was medium priority. 100% also indicated that finding new markets was a priority. 67% claimed it was high priority while 33% said it was medium priority. 66% also claimed developing business plans was a priority. 33% indicated it was a high priority while 33% said it was medium priority. 100% believed that finding technical expertise was a priority. 33% claimed it was high priority while 67% said it was medium priority.



# SAMPLE CO-OPERATIVES IN SECTOR

11

## **DSW Co-operative**

- Year established: Not published
- Location: Ottawa, ON
- Mission: DSW Co-operative works with people with developmental disabilities to facilitate their participation in all aspects of their home and community life, by building a co-operative work environment where both people with developmental disabilities and Developmental Services Workers thrive.
- Website: [www.dswcoop.ca](http://www.dswcoop.ca)

## **Les Serres Bio de L'Outaouais**

- Year established: Not published
- Location: Gatineau, QC
- Mission: The mission of Les Serres Bio de L'Outaouais is the social integration of people living with intellectual disabilities in the context of organic greenhouse vegetable production.
- Website: [www.serresbiodeloutaouais.com](http://www.serresbiodeloutaouais.com)

## **Ability Wood Products Co-operative**

- Year established: Not published
- Location: Glace Bay, NS
- Mission: Ability Wood Products Co-operative was established to advance the development of opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- Website: [www.facebook.com/AbilityWoodProducts](http://www.facebook.com/AbilityWoodProducts)



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