

Data Commons Cooperative



Annual Report 2014

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Section 1

Introduction

June 6, 2014

Since its incorporation in 2013, the Data Commons has worked hard on increasing our visibility, proactively engaging our membership, exploring additional options for financial sustainability, formalizing our vision and strategy, and strengthening our network through inter-organizational collaborations.

Our exposure has expanded by way of both presentations and articles. We have given presentations to both North American Students of Co-operation (NASCO) and the New Economy Coalition (NEC). Articles about Data Commons have appeared in the newsletters for the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation (CWCF), in the newsletter for the international worker co-op federation (CICOPA), on the blog for the Open Knowledge Foundation Labs (OKFNLabs), and on the blog for Shareable.net.

We have engaged our membership not only through traditional methods such as our newsletter and status updates, but also through one on one dialog that both empowered members with grassroots control over Data Commons, and enabled the Data Commons board and operations team to stay apprised of the directions that our members are heading in so that we may best serve them. This conversation with members included an opportunity for members to: directly get an answer to any questions they may have had about Data Commons; provide suggestions for this years AGM; and provide direction on how the Data Commons can best serve them.

Heading in to our 2013 AGM, our strategy was crystalized in the form of our membership packet, with five key projects serving as our strategic priorities. Since then, we've established a vision and strategy committee which will be bringing a proposed vision and interim strategic plan to this year's AGM. After the 2014 AGM, The committee will continue to work towards a strategic plan with the goal of strategic revisitation every three years, to provide a strong balance between organizational stability and adaptability.

We've also sought to increase the strength of our network by way of collaborations. This includes work with parallel mapping projects with groups such as the Freelancers Union and a grant-funded Social Economy network mapping project, as well as work with the Center for Popular Economics and the New Economy Coalition. Our organizational commitment to free and open infrastructure has paid dividends in that other groups with the same philosophy can share their success with us, and



Jamie Campbell
Co-op President

Jamie is a member of the
ParIT worker co-op in
Manitoba, Canada.

we with them. As we move into our second year of incorporation, we resolve to further build on the strides we've made this year. We resolve to continue to proactively engage membership, increase our membership roster, continue to deepen existing collaborations and seek new ones, further expand our capacity, and work even harder to serve the data needs of our members and our community as a whole.

Yours cooperatively,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jamie Campbell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jamie" and last name "Campbell" clearly distinguishable.

Jamie Campbell
President, Data Commons Cooperative

Section 2

Name and place of business

The legal name of the co-op is:

THE DATA COMMONS COOPERATIVE, INC.

It is registered as a Mercantile Co-Operative with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with ID number 001083005. Its date of incorporation in Massachusetts is July 5th, 2012. You can find our filings with the state at:

<http://corp.sec.state.ma.us/CorpWeb/CorpSearch/CorpSummary.aspx?FEIN=001083005>

There's a copy of our bylaws at <http://member.datacommons.coop/bylaws>. The location of the co-op's office is:

21 GOODNOW RD.
SHELBURNE FALLS
MA 01370, USA

Board members and the operation and tech teams are from all over, collaborating by email and teleconference. There may well be someone not too far from you who is, or has been involved in the Data Commons, so let us know if you are interested in meeting up in person.



Bridge of Flowers
Shelburne Falls
(photo by: [masstravel](#))

Section 3

Members of the co-op

There are currently **24** members of the co-op. In alphabetical order they are:

- ▷ Canadian Worker Co-op Federation
- ▷ Carolina Common Enterprise
- ▷ Cooperation Works!
- ▷ Cooperative Development Institute
- ▷ Cooperative Fund of New England
- ▷ Cooperative Grocer Network
- ▷ Cooperative Maine
- ▷ Cultivate.Coop
- ▷ Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy
- ▷ Food Co-op Initiative
- ▷ Grassroots Economic Organizing
- ▷ hOurworld
- ▷ Manitoba Cooperative Association
- ▷ New Economy Coalition
- ▷ North American Students of Co-operation
- ▷ Northwest Cooperative Development Center
- ▷ Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Co-op Development Center
- ▷ Sarapis Foundation
- ▷ Shareable and the Sharing Cities Network
- ▷ Solidarity Economy Network
- ▷ Solidarity NYC
- ▷ Solidarity Piedmont
- ▷ Tiny.Coop
- ▷ US Federation of Worker Co-ops

We give brief descriptions of the members here.

3.1 Canadian Worker Co-op Federation

CWCF has been committed to helping to build a (worker) co-operative economy since its founding in 1991. We drafted & signed the “[Quebec Declaration](#)” in 2011. Below is an excerpt:

“We have the mission to help worker co-operatives build a new world with a just and caring human face. In signing this Declaration, we pledge to do everything possible, in accordance with our values, to accomplish this mission:

- ▷ by facilitating the creation of new worker co-operatives,
- ▷ by facilitating the harmonious development of our co-operative members, and
- ▷ by partnering with all organizations sharing both this vision and the will to act for the emergence of this new mode of equitable, sustainable socio-economic development ...”

3.2 Carolina Common Enterprise

Organized as a new cooperative development center for North Carolina.

3.3 Cooperation Works!

CooperationWorks! is a national organization of cooperative development centers and practitioners that span the breadth of the United States. Using innovative strategies and proven business practices, CW Centers provide expertise across all aspects of co-op enterprise development, including feasibility analysis, business plan development, business launch and on-going training for operational success.

3.4 Cooperative Development Institute

Our mission is to develop the cooperative economy in the Northeast through supporting co-ops and networks. We provide direct business assistance, training, and networking. We have been supporting the Data Commons project since its inception in 2005, and helped it incorporate into a co-op last year.

3.5 Cooperative Fund of New England

For 38 years, CFNE has raised social investment from individuals and institutions and has made over 630 loans with these funds totaling over \$29 million. Most of these funds have been made to co-ops, including in the grocery, housing, worker, and agricultural sectors.

3.6 Cooperative Grocer Network

We provide a LinkedIn-like platform for more than 2,000 food co-op board and staff, publish 116,000 nodes of cooperative content on our website, and publish 28 year-old magazine, Cooperative Grocer. Mission: To strengthen all food co-ops by building community and facilitating the sharing and development of resources.

3.7 Cooperative Maine

Our mission is to promote increased development of cooperatives in Maine through supporting existing cooperatives and helping new ones form. Cooperative Maine was formed in the spring of 2007 by members of co-ops and others interested in promoting a more humane, egalitarian, and democratic economy and society.

3.8 Cultivate.Coop

Cultivate.Coop democratizes knowledge and information about co-ops and cooperatives. We have thousands of visitors a month.

3.9 Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy

The Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy (ECWD) is a non-profit cooperative organization established to aid in the continued growth of the workplace democracy movement. The ECWD is managed by the Coordinating Council. The ECWD works in cooperation with the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives to promote and develop worker-owned enterprises regionally and nationally.

3.10 Food Co-op Initiative

The Food Co-op Initiative Program is a 501(c)3 non-profit, dedicated to enabling a faster and more efficient start-up process to develop new retail grocery co-ops.

3.11 Grassroots Economic Organizing

We create and share stories, news and analysis about cooperative and solidarity economy organizing efforts, and we also facilitate conversations among movement practitioners to strengthen and deepen the work of inter-cooperation.

3.12 hOurworld

We are a worker owned co-op. We offer free access to software for timebanks across the country. We partner with local community timebanks and co-train with them. We hope to thread the time economy into the co-op economy!

3.13 Manitoba Cooperative Association

MCA is a provincial association of cooperative organizations, created by its members to enhance and support the development of a united, growing and influential cooperative movement in Manitoba.

3.14 New Economy Coalition

We are building a coalition of organizations and individuals committed to the values of a cooperative economy, so that we can more effectively coordinate, collaborate, and grow this movement together. We are also actively organizing students and young people on University campuses across North America. Many of these young people are passionate about coops, and we work hard to connect them with the resources they need to get involved with cooperatives.

3.15 North American Students of Co-operation

The NASCO family exists to organize and educate cooperatives — particularly common equity coops — and their members for the stated purpose of promoting a community-oriented cooperative movement.

3.16 Northwest Cooperative Development Center

We foster community economic development through the cooperative business model.

3.17 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Co-op Development Center

We support numerous cooperative and related projects especially in rural areas of the Rocky Mountain West.

3.18 Sarapis Foundation

Sarapis helps nonprofit, community and cooperative organizations use free, libre and open source tools and techniques to more effectively collaborate on open solutions to local challenges.

3.19 Shareable and the Sharing Cities Network

The Sharing Cities Network will be a grassroots network for sharing innovators to discover together how to create as many sharing cities around the world as fast as possible. The network will knit together a community of local sharing movements. The Sharing Cities Network will scale up and replicate successful sharing models by: - increasing collaboration between sharing projects - spreading best practices among members - catalyzing new sharing projects (including many forms of cooperatives) - ultimately, creating complete sharing cities To accomplish this our initial plans are to: - host peer learning through online classes and forums - help you create local sharing actions, such as sharing city map jams, share fests, gift circles, and skillshares - facilitate network-wide projects and campaigns - assist you with getting sharing-friendly policies in your city.

3.20 Solidarity Economy Network

The US Solidarity Economy Network works to build and strengthen the solidarity economy in the U.S., and to connect it to the global solidarity economy movement.

3.21 Solidarity NYC

SolidarityNYC connects, supports, and promotes New York City's solidarity economy by making pre-existing solidarity economics practices more visible. We achieve this through our various projects including our short films, interactive map, and research, all of which provide tangible examples of members/organizations that fall under the banner of the solidarity economy.

3.22 Solidarity Piedmont

We map the places in our area that participate in more humane, environmentally-sustainable, democratic, and fair economic practices. We try to give visibility to what could be called our local solidarity economy and research and celebrate the existing successes in our region while helping to grow possible new pieces of the network.

3.23 Tiny.Coop

We are setting up an open source, co-operatively run infrastructure for the web.

3.24 US Federation of Worker Co-ops

Founded in 2004, we provide member services, consulting services, and public education to support worker cooperatives. See our website at www.usworker.coop and our DAWN project at www.dawn.coop.

Section 4

The board and operations

At the time of writing, the co-op’s decision-making body is the following Board of Directors:

- Jamie Campbell (President, former Treasurer)
- Emily Lippold Cheney
- Paul Fitzpatrick (Treasurer, former Secretary, Tech Team member)
- Lauren Hudson
- Jim Johnson (former Treasurer, Tech Team member)
- Ethan Miller (former President, Membership Committee member, Tech Team member)
- David Morgan (Secretary)

The board has chosen to delegate certain responsibilities for the day-to-day activity of the co-op to an “Operations Team”:

- Kathleen Fekete
- Paul Fitzpatrick
- Noémi Giszpenc
- Daphne Loring

Here is a more complete list of people involved in the running of the co-op and roles they play (or played):

4.1 Jamie Campbell

Director; President; former Treasurer; former Steering Committee member.

4.2 Emily Lippold Cheney

Director.

4.3 Andy Danforth

Assistant Treasurer; Incorporator.

4.4 Kathleen Fekete

Operations Team member; Incorporator.

4.5 Paul Fitzpatrick

Director; Treasurer; former Secretary; Operations Team member; former Steering Committee member; Tech Team member.

4.6 Noémi Giszpenc

Operations Team member.

4.7 Lauren Hudson

Director.

4.8 Jim Johnson

Director; former Treasurer; former Steering Committee member; Tech Team member.

4.9 Daphne Loring

Operations Team member.

4.10 Ethan Miller

Director; former President; Membership Committee member; former Steering Committee member; Tech Team member.

4.11 David Morgan

Director; Secretary.

4.12 Incorporators

The following people helped get the co-op incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

- ▷ **Steve Backman.**
- ▷ **Andy Danforth.**
- ▷ **Kathleen Fekete.**
- ▷ **Micha Josephy.**
- ▷ **Ben Mauer.**
- ▷ **Brian van Slyke.**
- ▷ **Jeremiah Ward.**

Thank you all!

4.13 Alumni

We're excited to already have some illustrious alumni:

- **Jennifer Caruso:** Former Operations Team member.
- **Melissa Hoover:** Former Director; former Membership Committee member; former Steering Committee member.
- **Neily Jennings:** Former Operations Team member; former Steering Committee member.
- **Joe Marraffino:** Former Director; former President; former Operations Team member.
- **Adam Schwartz:** Former Steering Committee member.

4.14 Other help

Far too many people have helped out in making the co-op a reality than we can reasonably name here, or in ways that do not fit the categories above. Here are some highlights:

- **Benjamin Bradley:** Benjamin contributed to the development of find.coop, while at Ronin Tech Collective and then GaiaHost Collective.
- **Jennifer Caruso:** Jennifer was instrumental in finding funding for the co-op's business development, while at the Cooperative Development Institute.
- **Josh Crawford:** Josh helped create an early prototype of find.coop, while at Brattleboro Tech Collective.
- **Patrick J. Deluhery:** Patrick took care of the legal aspects of the co-op's incorporation, and fine-tuning its bylaws.
- **Dave Evans:** Dave helped create an early prototype of find.coop, while at Brattleboro Tech Collective.
- **Jason Lemieux:** Jason contributed to the development of find.coop, while at Eggplant Active Media Workers Collective.
- **Ben Mauer:** Ben chipped in some much needed graphic design for find.coop, thanks Quilted!
- **Jason Mott:** Jason contributed to the development of find.coop, while at Brattleboro Tech Collective and then Ronin Tech Collective.
- **Charles Uchu Strader:** Charles provided hosting support for find.coop with GaiaHost Collective, long before the Data Commons could pay its way.

Section 5

Finances

We give figures here for two periods, the first covering from June 2012 to May 2013 (labelled “2013”) and from June 2013 to May 2014 (called “2014”). The co-op formally incorporated in July 2012.

5.1 Statement of accounts

The co-op has liabilities amounting to a little over \$2000. The bulk of this is labor performed but not yet invoiced and paid. The co-op has a little over \$3000 in cash on hand, with a little over \$1000 in pending member dues.

	2014	2013
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	3311.65	1645.61
Legacy funds held by CDI	0.00	1971.00
Pending member dues	1200.92	1200.00
Total	4512.57	4816.61
 Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	2191.50	880.00
Total	2191.50	880.00

5.2 Statement of activities

Members capital contributions (dues) grew significantly this year as our membership grew and we put a system in place for invoicing. The biggest increase in expenses were in labor, directly via a part-time staff person, and indirectly via a basic administration agreement with CDI.

	2014	2013
Revenue		
Member dues	4591.67	2456.88
Donation	150.00	0.00
Total	4741.67	2456.88
Expenses		
Hosting	238.50	256.27
Taxes	456.00	456.00
Mass Corp filing fee	109.00	109.00
CDI admin	900.00	0.00
Labor	3200.00	0.00
Office supplies	0.00	21.08
Travel	122.75	0.00
Total	5026.25	842.35
Increase (decrease) in net from operations	(284.58)	1614.53

For now and the immediate future, our general approach is to grow labor to the extent that the co-op can afford, since that labor is currently our major limiting factor.

Section 6

Projects

6.1 Manitoba Cooperative Directory

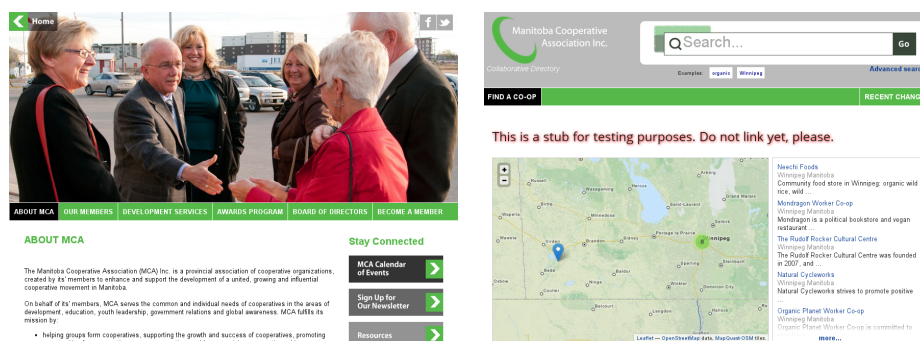
Cheryl Krostewitz of the Manitoba Cooperative Association described this project in our [April 2014](#) newsletter:

Manitoba Cooperative Association (MCA) is a provincial association of cooperatives. Our membership is broad and reflects the diversity of the cooperative community in Manitoba.

In 2008, a partnership was struck between MCA, the Province of Manitoba and the Conseil de développement économique des municipalités (CDEM) to create a strategy which would stimulate, broaden and sustain the development of a socially and economically successful Manitoba cooperative community. One of the aims of the strategy is to enhance collaboration among cooperatives, and what better way to do that than to create a database of Manitoba cooperatives showcasing the various goods and services that Manitoba co-ops provide?

MCA joined Data Commons in 2013 and is now in the process of gathering information from the over 400 Manitoba cooperatives to populate its database. As you can well imagine, this is a daunting task but one which has been made much easier with the assistance of Data Commons. We truly appreciate their professionalism and advice and are really looking forward to seeing the end result of our database project.

Cheryl Krostewitz, Manitoba Cooperative Association



Left: Typical page on MCA website at www.manitoba.coop, developed and maintained by a web development company for MCA. Right: Draft directory at find.manitoba.coop, hosted by the DCC, to be driven by a spreadsheet maintained by the MCA. Due to launch next in July 2014.

6.2 Solidarity Economy Network

In September 2013, the U.S. government's National Science Foundation (NSF) funded five researchers (two economists, two geographers, and one political scientist) to study the solidarity economy in the eastern United States. The grant covers two years of research at four research sites representing different population scales: New York City (pop. 8.2 million); Philadelphia (pop. 1.5 million); Worcester, MA (pop. 180,000), and Western Mass., which is home to large number of rural communities. One portion of the grant covers creation of an interactive website that will display the data collected about the solidarity economy. Data Commons connected the SEN researchers to [ParIT](#), a web developer worker co-op member of the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation, and encouraged the team to consider development that would be compatible with the overall goals of the Data Commons. That work is now in progress.

6.3 The “Stone Soup” family of directories

This is a project continuing from last year.

The co-op runs an online directory of organizations, at [find.coop](#), [solidarityeconomy.org](#), and perhaps other domains in future. The idea of this directory is for it to be a “Stone Soup” effort that brings together multiple databases from groups working on alternative economies under many names: the new economy, the cooperative economy, the solidarity economy, the social economy, and more.

The stone soup directory software is in use for both the Manitoba Cooperative Directory (see Section 6.1) and the Solidarity Economy Network project (see Section 6.2).

The software is free and open source, available at:

<https://github.com/datacommons/stonesoup>

We’d welcome the participation of any programmers out there interested in contributing!

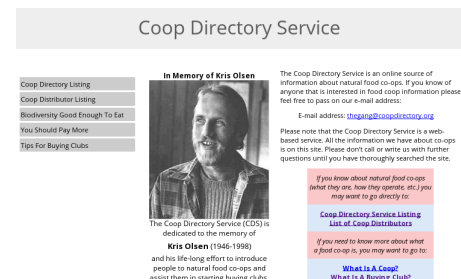
6.4 coopdirectory.org

This is a project continuing from last year.

From 1999 through 2011, the Cooperating Directory Service, a Minnesota non-profit initially funded from the estate of Kris Olsen, operated a directory of natural food co-ops at [coopdirectory.org](#). When the CDS non-profit closed in 2011, Stuart Reid of the Food Co-op Initiative was asked to take it on. He, in turn, checked in with the nascent Data Commons (of which the Food Co-op Initiative is a founding member) to see what it could do to help. A Data Commons volunteer did some basic triage on the site, and the site is now very low maintainance (listings are updated in a google spreadsheet). It receives frequent high quality submissions, and ranks highly for searches for common terms such as “food co-op.”



The “Stone Soup” Directory began as [find.coop](#), and is growing to serve several overlapping but distinct communities.



The [coopdirectory.org](#) site lists natural food co-ops throughout the US, and is dedicated to the memory of Kris Olsen.

6.5 Investment in infrastructure

The Data Commons Co-op has a vision of communities collaborating and sharing knowledge about their overlapping economies. There are many obstacles to making such a vision work, some cultural, some technical.

How great would it be to be if the lists we keep in spreadsheets and databases were easier to share, compare, and collaborate on? The DCC is developing software to do this, in collaboration with programmers in the field of Open Data. This software is shaping up well, and having an impact. The UK-based Open Data Institute (co-founded by Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the web) has blogged about our software, most recently when releasing a gadget built from it:

<http://theodi.org/blog/csvhub-github-diffs-for-csv-files>

A simple DCC specification for describing differences between tabular data has been accepted for inclusion on a popular site for organizing protocols and formats for open data:

<http://dataprotocols.org/tabular-diff-format/>

All this is extremely geeky. But it is helping to create a potentially revolutionary technology, a fundamentally different way of collaborating on data projects. The Data Commons Co-op is uniquely well placed to make this happen and bring the benefits to our communities.