



# Cooperatives in the New Energy Economy: **Anchoring Ownership, Wealth, and Jobs in Appalachia's New Energy Economy.**

March 5, 2024

Appalachians have a long history of hard work, resilience, and coming together to face enormous challenges. Our region is a place of ingenuity. A place where families and neighbors look out for one another. For far too long, however, the Appalachian region has suffered from the natural resource curse. Corporations made billions from the wealth of the land and labor of the people but siphoned it away, leaving the region in poverty, lands damaged and workers and neighbors sick. Partly in response to the historical price of overdependence on absentee owners in extractive industries and manufacturing, our region helped spark the U.S local wealth creation movement after the economic collapse of the late 1970s and 1980s.

While most people might think of worker-owned enterprises when people refer to cooperatives, there are many kinds of cooperative models. This report provides an overview of the different types of cooperatives, provides examples of successful operations, identifies the role they can play in the transition to a new energy economy and discusses why it matters. It also makes recommendations for how to best encourage and support growth in this sector as a mechanism to build back local wealth lost to the absentee corporations of the past and present.

Purchasing, producer, agricultural and other kinds of cooperatives and shared service networks can be employed, expanded and/or created to tackle the many market failures in the conventional energy economy. Shared service networks serving producer cooperatives can also enhance efficiency and reduce costs in production, purchasing, marketing while increasing their collective leverage in other ways.<sup>1</sup> These networks tend to keep more of the supply chains and distribution channels linked with cooperatives in our region to promote products made in Appalachia, one of the best mechanisms for building local wealth instead of enriching absentee corporations.<sup>2</sup> Worker ownership also helps anchor investment to our region.

Appalachia has long had experience with cooperative enterprise through agricultural and utility co-ops

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1 Christina Clamp, Eklou R. Amendah, and Carol Coren. "Shared-Services Cooperatives: Strengthening Local Economies through Collaboration." CIRIEC Working Papers 1923, Université de Liège, 2019.

2 The Ohio Worker Ownership Network. "Building Legacies: Retaining Jobs and Creating Wealth Through Worker Ownership." 2021. [https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5cdc97dbfcbd7455a5788315/613fa03b14b753e897ebd025\\_Building%20Legacies%20\\_Report%20\(fn\).pdf](https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5cdc97dbfcbd7455a5788315/613fa03b14b753e897ebd025_Building%20Legacies%20_Report%20(fn).pdf).

that grew where private markets failed.<sup>3</sup> In the transition to a sustainable economy, opportunities exist to expand cooperatives. For example, electric co-ops can partner with communities and businesses to develop clean energy – solar, wind, combined heat and power technology fueled with biowaste – as well as build out broadband networks. Shared service cooperatives could also expand within Appalachian manufacturing supply chains that produce the equipment and services needed in the new energy economy while promoting circular, climate-friendly manufacturing practices. Large purchasing cooperatives can create the collective leverage needed to demand the sustainable products needed for the new energy economy be made in Appalachia.

In this report, we outline the various forms of cooperative enterprise today and provide examples of successful operations. Appendices provide links to definitions, technical assistance, and state laws pertaining to cooperatives in the central Appalachian counties of Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky.

# Cooperatives 101

## Democratic structure

The International Cooperative Alliance is the global steward of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity – the Values and Principles of the Cooperative Movement, which include:<sup>4</sup>

- 1. Voluntary and Open Membership** - Cooperatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.
- 2. Democratic Member Control** - Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote), and cooperatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.
- 3. Member Economic Participation** - Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.
- 4. Autonomy and Independence** - Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.
- 5. Education, Training, and Information** - Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of cooperation.
- 6. Cooperation among Cooperatives** - Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.

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<sup>3</sup> Tennessee Valley Authority. “The Cooperative Model.” <https://www.tva.com/about-tva/our-history/tva-heritage/the-cooperative-model>

<sup>4</sup> See International Cooperative Alliance at <https://ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>

**7. Concern for Community** – Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

The International Alliance of Cooperatives defines a cooperative enterprise as “**an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.**” The intrinsic values of a cooperative include democracy, self-help, self-responsibility, equity, equality, and solidarity.

## Many kinds of cooperatives

There are many kinds of cooperatives (“co-ops”). Three of the most common types are worker cooperatives – businesses in which the workers own the company and participate in the management; consumer cooperatives – stores in which the members own and may also work in the business; and housing coops – or apartment complexes in which the residents own the building. (See Appendix 1).

There are also different types of cooperative relationships. For example, the nation’s 100 largest agricultural cooperatives help farmers market and ship crops and manage risk, among other things.<sup>5</sup> In more than half of the landmass of the United States, electricity is produced and sold by utility cooperatives, which may have democratic input around the setting of rates, capital investment, and distribution of profits.<sup>6</sup> Wholesale grocery cooperatives help retail food enterprises achieve cost savings through bulk purchasing;<sup>7</sup> consumer cooperatives may manage and control grocery stores,<sup>8</sup> retail concerns and the purchase of solar and wind power.<sup>9</sup> There are marketing cooperatives, producer cooperatives, purchasing cooperatives, and multi-stakeholder cooperatives.

Today, companies come together and cooperate on shared service platforms, which cut costs by pooling resources, purchasing power, marketing, and other functions. Cooperation through shared services – referred to as a “second tier” of cooperation – can help member cooperatives sustain and grow, as described later in this paper.<sup>10</sup>

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5 Morning Ag Clips. “Top 100 Agricultural Coops Continue Strong Performance.” November 7, 2022. <https://www.morningagclips.com/top-100-agricultural-Cooperatives-continue-strong-performance/>

6 Matt Grimley. “Just how democratic are rural electric coops?” Institute for Local Self Reliance, January 13, 2016. <https://ilsr.org/just-how-democratic-are-rural-electric-cooperatives/>

7 Supermarket News. “Largest U.S. Grocery Cooperatives.” November 2, 2009. <https://www.supermarketnews.com/retail-amp-financial/largest-us-grocery-cooperatives>.

8 Healthy Food Access. “Grocery Stores and Cooperatives.” <https://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/launch-a-business-models-grocery-stores-coops>

9 Kokosing Solar. “Central Ohio Community Solar Group Buy.” [https://kokosingsolar.com/central-ohio-community-solar-group-buy-program/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAj\\_CrBhD-ARIsAlIMxT-fJEmwT\\_lpdKPWapU6J24FG1s2rLeMQMdauxkoOvZdztq0gEjBq4aAvVcEALw\\_wcB](https://kokosingsolar.com/central-ohio-community-solar-group-buy-program/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAj_CrBhD-ARIsAlIMxT-fJEmwT_lpdKPWapU6J24FG1s2rLeMQMdauxkoOvZdztq0gEjBq4aAvVcEALw_wcB). ; see also Kokosing Solar. “Third Sun Solar in Amicus Solar Purchasing Cooperative.” August 3, 2014. <https://kokosingsolar.com/third-sun-solar-in-amicus-solar-purchasing-cooperative/>. ; Cleveland Owns. “The Energy Democracy Initiative.” <https://www.clevelandowns.coop/the-energy-democracy-initiative>.

10 Christina Clamp Et. al. “Shared-Services Cooperatives: Strengthening Local Economies through Collaboration” Op.Cit.

## Worker Cooperatives and ESOPS

When people hear “Employee owned” they may think of Employee Stock Ownership Plans or they may think of worker cooperatives.

An ESOP is a type of retirement plan recognized under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA). It is formed when an owner sells all or part of a company to the workers through their retirement plan. The ESOP borrows money to purchase the stock; the company pays back the ESOP loan and as it does so stock is released to participant accounts within the ESOP. After the note is paid off, stock and/or cash is contributed to participant accounts on an annual basis. If 30 percent or more of the firm is sold to the workers, the owner gets a tax deferral on capital gains made in the sale.

ESOPs can have participatory and democratic management, but are not required to. ESOPs are a form of beneficial (not direct) ownership - the stock is actually owned by the ESOP trust, the participants own the vested financial value of the stock.

Cooperatives are typically a type of corporate entity or corporation. In some states they are considered or called non-profit corporations or associations. Cooperative conversions can be financed in a similar way to ESOPs - the company borrows money, pays off the selling owner, and the company cash flow pays back the loan. Start-up cooperatives are typically financed by a combination of commercial/patient capital, membership fees or equity, and sometimes also non-member equity investments. Here, too, the seller benefits from favorable tax treatment.

Co-ops separate out the financial benefit of ownership from the governance benefit of ownership - these ownership benefits are combined in the typical stock-based ownership models. Governance is one member one vote; financial benefit is based on the amount of financial activity provided to the co-op by a member - in a worker cooperative, your share of the profits is typically based on your number of work hours provided to the cooperative.

In a worker cooperative, ownership and control of the business is derived from working in the company, rather than from simply investing capital in it. In this way, worker cooperatives are structured to provide a stable source of profitable work for the worker-owners instead of a profitable investment for the shareholder-owners.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> ICA Group. “Internal Capital Accounts.” <https://icagroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Internal-Capital-Accounts.pdf>

## History of cooperative enterprise in Appalachia

The cooperative enterprise structure in this country may be traced back to the 1700s.<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Franklin founded the first cooperative in the United States, the “Philadelphia Contributorship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire, in 1752.” The Rochdale Pioneers established a consumers’ cooperative in 1844 in Manchester, England. Between 1909 and 1938, many enterprises based on collective benefits were created: the nation’s first credit union, telephone services, cooperative day care, large housing cooperatives, one of the best-known consumer cooperatives, Recreation Equipment, Inc. (REI), and the widely used Credit Union National Association’s (CUNA) Mutual Insurance Group.<sup>13</sup>

The Rural Electrification Act of 1936 established the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Electrification Administration to finance the extension of electric power to rural America.<sup>14</sup> Today, the Appalachian region is served by scores of rural electricity cooperatives.<sup>15</sup> There are 26 electric distribution cooperatives in Kentucky that are members of both the Kentucky Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and two generation and transmission (“G&T”) cooperatives that supply power to the distribution Cooperatives. They serve more than 1.8 million people in 117 of Kentucky’s 120 counties.<sup>16</sup>

The Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association (PREA) is made up of 14 electric cooperatives in Pennsylvania and New Jersey supply electricity to more than 235,000 rural households, businesses and industries, representing more than 600,000 consumers. The cooperatives serving Pennsylvania own and maintain about 12.5% of the electric distribution lines in the state, covering nearly one-third of the Commonwealth’s land area in 42 counties.<sup>17</sup>

Ohio’s Electric Cooperatives trade association is made up of Buckeye Power, the cooperative G&T, and two dozen distribution cooperatives serving more than 380,000 homes and businesses in 77 of Ohio’s 88 counties.<sup>18</sup>

Tennessee’s Electric Cooperative Association, a consortium of Tennessee’s rural electric cooperatives and part of the Appalachian Electric Cooperative, provides electricity to more than 2.5 million homes and businesses in 84 of the state’s 95 counties.<sup>19</sup>

In West Virginia, Harrison Rural Electrification Association, Inc. (HREA), the Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative, and the Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative serve several counties.<sup>20</sup>

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12 Lynn Pittman. “History of Cooperatives in The United States: An Overview, Center for Cooperatives.” University of Wisconsin – Madison, December 2018. [https://resources.uwcc.wisc.edu/History\\_of\\_Cooperatives.pdf](https://resources.uwcc.wisc.edu/History_of_Cooperatives.pdf)

13 Stephanie Durden, Maggie Haight, Laura Hanson, Kimberly Harris, Francisco Perez, Daniel Sanchez, Sarah Ray, and Laura Tatum. “Working and Rebuilding Together: Worker Cooperatives as an Economic Development Tool.” Princeton University Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs, January 2013. <https://spia.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/other/591a-Advance-Memphis-Report.pdf>.

14 <https://spia.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/other/591a-Advance-Memphis-Report.pdf>

15 Rural Electric Cooperative Toolkit. “Rural Electric Cooperatives 101.” <https://www.electriccooporganizing.org/rec101>.

16 Kentucky electric cooperatives at <https://kyelectric.coop/>

17 Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association, <https://www.prea.com/about-us>

18 Ohio’s Electric Cooperatives at <https://ohioec.org/ohios-cooperatives>

19 Harrison Rural Electric Association at <https://www.harrisonrea.com/>

20 Tennessee electric cooperatives at <https://www.tnelectric.org/>

## Agricultural cooperatives

There is also a deep history of agricultural cooperatives in America, and in Appalachia. Groups like the Grange, the National Farmers Union, and the Farmers Union Central Exchange (CENEX) nurtured cooperative growth until antitrust legislation affected them in the 1890s.<sup>21</sup> As a result of many court rulings, cooperatives became illegal, and farmers engaging in collective actions that influenced the market were subject to prosecution. That changed in 1922 with the passing of the Capper Volstead Act, which generally guaranteed growers' rights to form Cooperatives and act in unison.<sup>22</sup> The figure below demonstrates the relatively high per capita prevalence of these cooperatives in Kentucky and West Virginia.

State	Number of agricultural cooperatives	Number of members	Population	Members per 1000 population
Kentucky	19	155,175	4,512,310	34.39
Ohio	34	40,004	11,756,058	3.40
Pennsylvania	19	10,714	12,972,008	0.83
Tennessee	53	62,859	3,546,382	17.72
West Virginia	9	58,152	1,775,156	32.76
United States	1,699	1,844,677	333,287,557	5.53
USDA_HistoricalFarmerCooperativeStatistics_1913-2022.xlsx				
<a href="https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html">https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-state-detail.html</a>				

## Cooperatives in the New Energy Economy

Domestic coal production has fallen more than 65 percent in Appalachia, devastating workers and the regional economy and creating a need for new opportunities.<sup>23</sup> As we move toward a new energy economy, Appalachia's cooperative spirit can help fill the economic vacuum by identifying and tackling new opportunities.<sup>24</sup>

Wind and utility-scale solar projects, and production of manufactured parts for these installations, are examples of job creation opportunities. Electricity generation projects are typically developed in rural areas with access to land for solar and wind. Both are plentiful in Appalachia. Renewables in the region are cost-competitive with coal: In fact, in Pennsylvania, coal generation plants are largely closed and what remains are scheduled to close.<sup>25</sup>

21 "In the mid-1800s, antitrust legislation and court decisions championed by the biggest private corporations checked the growth of cooperatives. "The rise of agricultural cooperatives was at the heart of the populist movement which mounted a powerful challenge to emerging monopoly capital before it was defeated electorally, in public policy, and in the courts." See Goodwyn, Lawrence, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America*, Oxford University Press, 1978 at <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-populist-moment-9780195024173?cc=us&lang=en&>

22 National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International. "Agriculture Cooperatives." <https://ncbaclusa.coop/resources/co-op-sectors/agriculture-Cooperatives/>.

23 Bureau of Business and Economic Research. "Coal Production and Employment in Appalachia." West Virginia University (Commissioned by the Appalachian Regional Commission), September 2022. <https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-09-Coal-Production-and-Employment-in-Appalachia.pdf>

24 Jeff Slyfield. "A new era of Clean Energy for Rural America." Natural Resources Defense Council, May 30, 2023. <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/jeff-slyfield/new-era-clean-energy-rural-america>

25 Frazier, Reid, "Homer City — Pa.'s largest coal-fired power plant — will close in July," State Impact Pennsylvania (a project of NPR

Citing a 2020 study by Lazard, the Center for Energy and Sustainable Development of the University of West Virginia School of Law stated that since 2009, the cost of solar energy and wind energy decreased by 90 percent and 71 percent respectively per megawatt hour - even before accounting for tax incentives and rebates.<sup>26</sup> A 2023 Lazard analysis shows even lower cost for renewables relative to the cost of electricity generated by coal.<sup>27</sup> As noted later in this report, electric cooperatives in Central Appalachia are installing solar and wind generation capacity.

The largest growth of cooperative enterprise in the new energy economy has been in consumer and purchasing cooperatives – those that help consumers aggregate demand for clean energy to homes, businesses, and industry, and those that help contractors get better deals on purchased products to install solar arrays on homes and retrofit homes and offices for energy efficiency. Amicus Solar is an

example of a multi-faceted cooperative enterprise that works with a network of solar companies on purchasing as well as other business concerns, such as marketing, operations and maintenance, and financing.<sup>28</sup>

**Amicus Solar is a member-owned purchasing cooperative of 80 high-quality, independent, values-driven solar energy companies.**

#### **Collaborative Topics**

- Safety – Policies & Practices
- Marketing – Effective lead generation
- Sales – Proposal tools
- Installation Operations – best practices
- IT tools for business optimization
- Benchmarking KPI's
- Raising capital/private placements
- Energy storage deployment
- Preparing for upcoming policy changes
- Risk management
- Procurement best practices
- Project Management
- C&I – Effective sales tactics

Co-op Cincy's 14 worker cooperatives create a mutually supportive cooperative ecosystem.<sup>29</sup> Cleveland Owns, described later in this report, is incubating a purchasing cooperative made up of nonprofits, and has also empowered residents to develop community-owned solar arrays through two separate projects, Cleveland Solar

Cooperative and The BC.<sup>30</sup>

## **Cooperative purchase of renewable energy**

Consumers are coming together in the United States to purchase renewable sources of energy. Federal tax credits for installation of renewable power for residential and business use, as well as to produce equipment for the wind

and solar industries, have driven costs down for the consumer and have driven the increase in renewable energy generation.<sup>31</sup>

affiliated companies), April 4, 2023 at <https://www.wesa.fm/environment-energy/2023-04-05/homer-city-coal-plant-closure> ; see also Carlton, Audrey, "Private equity kept aging Homer City plant open, then closed it with no plan for the community," Pennsylvania Capital Star, February 18, 2024 at [https://penncapital-star.com/energy-environment/private-equity-kept-aging-homer-city-plant-open-then-closed-it-with-no-plan-for-the-community/#:~:text=The%20Homer%20City%20Generating%20Station%2C%20a%20coal%2Dfired%20power%20plant,\(Capital%2DStar%20photo\)](https://penncapital-star.com/energy-environment/private-equity-kept-aging-homer-city-plant-open-then-closed-it-with-no-plan-for-the-community/#:~:text=The%20Homer%20City%20Generating%20Station%2C%20a%20coal%2Dfired%20power%20plant,(Capital%2DStar%20photo)).

26 Center for Energy and Sustainable Development, College of Law. "West Virginia's energy future." West Virginia University, December 14, 2020. <https://energy.law.wvu.edu/west-virginias-energy-future/>

27 Lazard, "Lazard's leveled cost of energy analysis - Version 16.0 at <https://www.lazard.com/media/20zoovyg/lazards-lcoeplus-april-2023.pdf>

28 Amicus Solar at <https://www.amicussolar.com/>

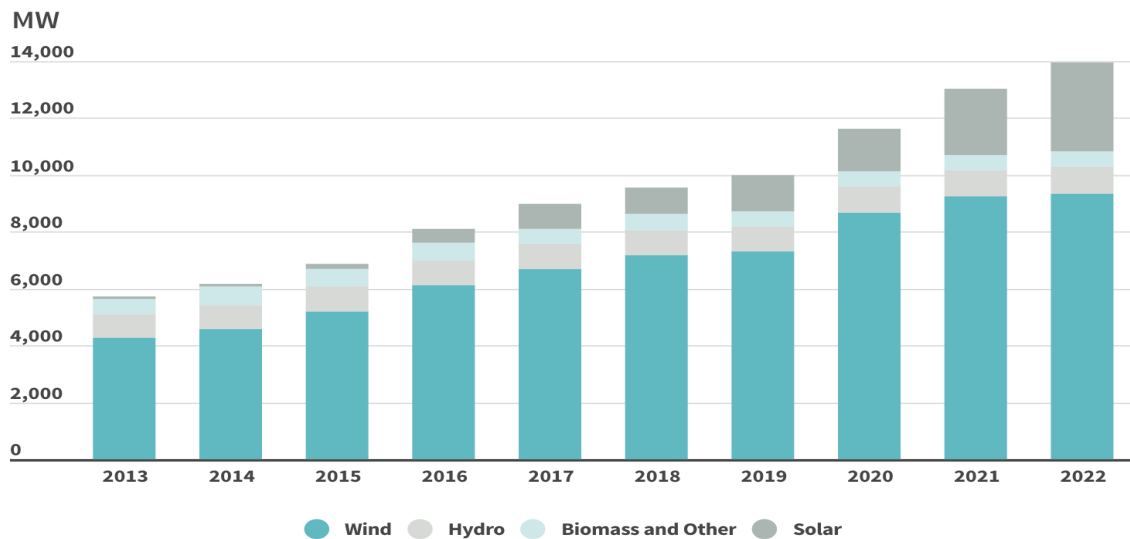
29 Co-op Cincy. "Overview." <https://coopcincy.org/overview>

30 Cleveland Owns supports groups of workers and neighbors as they seek to turn what they have into what they need... the organization supports five cornerstone cooperatives working in clean energy, food access, and digital access, and collective purchasing. Cleveland Owns. <https://www.clevelandowns.coop/>

31 Paul Wesslund. "Wind energy is soaring." Cooperative Living, September 2023. <https://www.co-opliving.com/7828/wind->

Keith Taylor’s book, “Governing the Wind Energy Commons: Renewable Energy and Community Development” (West Virginia Press, 2019) explores the power of electric cooperatives, significant players in the central Appalachian region, in democratizing energy. The electric cooperatives in central Appalachia are an access point to active resident participation in the governance of wind energy and, by extension, the electric grid as a whole. It is a venue that engages consumers directly in the provision and procurement of goods and services demanded by member-owners.<sup>32</sup>

### Cumulative Co-op Renewable Capacity, Owned and Under Contract



Source: NRECA, America’s Electric Cooperatives, website, at <https://www.electric.coop/electric-cooperative-fact-sheet>

Electric cooperatives today are leaders in the installation of wind generation equipment. There are several forms of mutual or cooperative enterprises in the wind sector:<sup>33</sup>

- **Community shared ownership**—In a community-based model, a wind farm will have shared ownership with the landowners upon which the equipment is located and other community members. Property owners whose land was used for the wind farm are generally given a choice between a monthly cash lease and ownership units in the development.
- **Cooperative ownership**—A wind turbine cooperative, also known as a wind energy cooperative, is a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise that follows the cooperative model, investing in wind turbines or wind farms.<sup>34</sup> “Inside the RADWIND Project” explores a partnership between the

energy-is-soaring/?utm\_source=rss&utm\_medium=rss&utm\_campaign=wind-energy-is-soaring; Sonia Aggarwal. “A clean and profitable future dawns for America’s rural electric Cooperatives.” *Forbes Magazine*, June 21, 2023 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/energyinnovation/2023/06/21/a-clean-and-profitable-era-for-rural-electric-cooperatives/?sh=77ce5ea92ad9>; Windustry. “Wind Energy Basics.” <https://www.windustry.org/wind-energy-basics>; Philip Montgomery. “The blade runners powering a wind farm.” *The New Yorker Magazine*, November 28, 2022. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/11/28/the-blade-runners-powering-a-wind-farm>

32 Taylor, Keith. “Governing the Wind Energy Commons: Renewable Energy and Community Development.” University of West Virginia Press, 2019.

33 Energy5. “The growth of solar wind projects.” at <https://energy5.com/growth-of-community-owned-wind-energy-projects>

34 NRECA. “Distributed Wind Case Study: Fox Islands Electric Cooperative.” July 2021. <https://www.cooperative.com/programs-services/bts/radwind/documents/radwind-case-study-fox-islands-july-2021.pdf>



federal government and electric cooperatives in the growing wind generation sector.<sup>35</sup>

Across the nation, solar energy is being purchased and installed by established cooperatives. The United States Department of Agriculture’s “Rural Business - Cooperative Service” program identifies several models, including a purchasing model, with bulk purchase of solar installation for homes; a standard model, in which people come together and fund a solar installation, which powers their homes; and a dividend model, in which a group finances a solar installation and receives payment for the sale of the clean energy to other users.<sup>36</sup>

The USDA also points out that 42 million Americans receive their electricity through an electric cooperative. As customer-owned entities, these cooperatives serve the needs and wishes of their customers. As a result, 227 utility cooperatives in 33 states offer a form of community solar.<sup>37</sup>

The Tennessee Valley Authority funded the first utility-scale community solar project in Tennessee.<sup>38</sup> The Solar Alliance company completed construction of a solar installation for the Appalachian Electric Cooperative in 2016. It supplies renewable energy to power approximately 130 homes annually. All residential and commercial members of AEC are eligible to participate in Cooperative Community Solar, potentially receiving credits on their monthly electric bills.<sup>39</sup>

## Advantages of Cooperation

### Productivity

Workplace democracy has been found to enhance productivity and job satisfaction, lower costs, anchor capital in the local economy and stabilize communities.<sup>40</sup> Other forms of cooperatives, from consumer cooperatives through purchasing and production cooperatives, offer multiple benefits, including in cost savings, reduced rates, specialized financing. There are other benefits as well, including technical assistance and sources of capital for start-ups, operations, and expansion.

John Logue and Jacquelyn Yates of the Ohio Employee Ownership Center at Kent State University found that worker ownership on its own may not impact productivity, but employee ownership combined with real participation in the decision-making at the enterprise level does improve labor productivity and other aspects of business performance.<sup>41</sup> Other scholars researching cooperatives found

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35 NRECA, America’s Electric Cooperatives, at <https://www.electric.coop/along-those-lines-radwind-project>

36 Cooperative and Community Opportunities in Solar Energy, United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Business - Cooperative Service, February 2021 at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/CooperativeAndCommunityOpportunitiesInSolarEnergy.pdf>

37 Id.

38 Solar Alliance. “Utility scale solar power.” at <https://www.solaralliance.com/commercial-solar-arrays/utilities/>

39 Appalachian Electric Cooperative at <https://www.aecoop.org/>

40 Blasi, Joseph R. and Douglas L. Kruse, Broad-based Worker Ownership and Profit Sharing:

Can These Ideas Work in the Entire Economy? Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations, March 6, 2012 at

[https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Centers/Institute\\_Employee\\_Ownership/Blasi%20and%20Kruse%20Real%20Utopias%20proposal%20--%20worker%20ownership.pdf](https://smlr.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Centers/Institute_Employee_Ownership/Blasi%20and%20Kruse%20Real%20Utopias%20proposal%20--%20worker%20ownership.pdf); Douglas L. Kruse, Richard B. Freeman and Joseph R.

Blasi, editors, “Shared Capitalism at Work,” National Bureau of Economic Research, April 2010 at <https://www.nber.org/system/files/chapters/c8085/c8085.pdf>

41 Jacquelyn Yates and John Logue. “Productivity in Cooperatives and Worker-owned Enterprises: Ownership and Participation Make a Difference!” Rutgers, January 2005. <https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/productivity-in-cooperatives-and-worker-owned-enterprises->

<https://cleo.rutgers.edu/articles/productivity-in-cooperatives-and-worker-owned-enterprises->

similar results. In a 2017 research paper on empirical evidence about the performance of cooperatives in the United States, Blasi, Freedman and Krause found that: **“The averages show that the key indicator of economic performance, productivity, and many other measures related to firm performance are higher for firms that operate with profit-sharing and employee stock ownership than for otherwise comparable firms that do not follow those practices. The averages also show that workers in firms with shares and participatory work relations have higher compensation, stay on the job longer, and offer more suggestions for improvement than workers in other firms.”**<sup>42</sup>

A national survey of 1,147 worker owners in 82 worker cooperatives, conducted in 2017 by the Democracy at Work Institute, found people benefit materially and psychologically from the kind of workplace democracy engendered by worker cooperatives. The benefits to the company included enhanced performance in recruitment and retention of workers and reduced shirking on the job. Benefits to the community and workers included a broad cultural enhancement: The ethic of the enterprise was woven into the civic fabric of their communities, encouraging civic and political participation outside of the firm as well as within.<sup>43</sup>

## Reliability and customer relations

McKinsey and Company found that worker cooperatives differ from publicly traded companies in attention to member and customer needs and suggested that their best growth potential is in new and fast-growing markets.<sup>44</sup> This positions the cooperative for success in the new energy economy. Growing new energy sectors are coming of age in an era affected by supply problems related to the pandemic and shipping problems.

As manufacturing firms reshore, recreating reliable supply chains will be of paramount importance. A supply chain cooperative focused on bulk purchasing can be an effective venue for increasing the reliability of on-time deliveries.<sup>45</sup> Increasing delivery reliability is partly a “law of larger numbers” – compared to a single farm, sourcing from many firms increases the likelihood that customers can be served as scheduled (even while acknowledging that correlation of yields across cooperative producers makes elimination of supply risks impossible).<sup>46</sup>

## Financing

Targeted sources of finance, tax incentives and internal productivity enhancement make cooperatives and worker ownership a competitive form of business enterprise.

Worker-owned enterprises are supported by targeted sources of capital - dedicated pools for financing

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ownership-and-participation-make-a-difference/.

42 Blasi, Joseph R., Richard B. Freeman and Douglas L. Krause, “Evidence: What the U.S. Research Shows about Worker Ownership,” Harvard Office of Shared Communication, 2017 at <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/34591608>

43 Democracy at Work Institute. “How Economic Democracy Impacts Workers, Firms, and Communities.” <https://democracy.institute.coop/how-economic-democracy-impacts-workers-firms-and-communities>.

44 McKinsey on Cooperatives, 2012 at [https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/dotcom/client\\_service/strategy/mckinsey%20on%20cooperatives/pdfs/mck\\_on\\_cooperatives-full\\_issue.ashx](https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/dotcom/client_service/strategy/mckinsey%20on%20cooperatives/pdfs/mck_on_cooperatives-full_issue.ashx)

45 Harmon, Brian, 5 ways GPOs and cooperatives optimize procurement, SDI, April 19, 2023 at <https://www.sdi.com/resources/blog/5-ways-gpos-and-supply-chain-cooperatives-optimize-procurement/>

46 Bogetoft, Peter, “How upstream cooperatives limit downstream holdups,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, January 2021, pp. 156-168 at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167268120304455>

established by banks, other targeted seed funds, targeted philanthropic grants and loans supporting cooperative enterprises. Several sources are described below as examples. A longer list is provided in Appendix 3.

**The National Cooperative Bank** is a congressionally chartered cooperative bank that has focused on financing cooperatives since 1988.<sup>47</sup> The bank was created to address the financial needs of an underserved market and serves as an advocate for America’s cooperatives and their members, placing special emphasis on serving the needs of communities that are economically challenged. It is headquartered in Hillsboro, Ohio (Highland County is one of the Appalachian Regional Commission’s counties) and is the 14th largest bank in the state of Ohio.

**Local Enterprise Assistance Fund** (LEAF) finances worker-owned companies or existing businesses converting to a worker ownership. They are not focused on Appalachia specifically but would consider providing financing for cooperatives in Appalachia.<sup>48</sup>

**CoBank** is a national bank affiliated with the national farm credit system, with roots dating back to the establishment of that system in 1916. The Farm Credit Act of 1933 restructured the system into a network of 13 “Banks for Cooperatives” serving specific districts across the nation. The Central Bank for Cooperatives served large accounts and accounts that crossed district lines.<sup>49</sup> Today it specializes in financing for cooperative enterprises.<sup>50</sup>

**Community Development Finance Institutions** across the nation provide access to capital, business coaching, and low-interest rate loans with a community benefit focus. There are several Appalachian CDFIs serving the ReImagine area.<sup>51</sup>



**Seed Commons**, a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI), has a national focus of providing start-up capital for worker owned companies.<sup>52</sup> There are affiliated lenders in the Appalachian footprint.

**Local funds:** Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Boston, Oakland, and other cities are homes to local funds that support worker ownership. The presence of such local funds is important to creating an ecosystem supportive of cooperative organizations.

47 National Cooperative Bank. <https://www.ncb.coop/>. ; DepositAccounts. “National Cooperative Bank.” <https://www.depositaccounts.com/banks/ncb-fsb.html>. and Wikipedia. “National Cooperative Bank.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Cooperative\\_Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Cooperative_Bank).

48 See Local Enterprise Assistance Fund at <https://leaffund.org/>; also, information taken from interview with LEAF board member Christina Clamp, January 24, 2023.

49 CoBank website at <https://www.cobank.com/web/cobank/corporate>

50 Cooperative and Community Opportunities in Solar Energy, United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Business - Cooperative Service, February 2021 at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/CooperativeAndCommunityOpportunitiesInSolarEnergy.pdf>

51 OpportunityFinance Network. “What is a CDFI?” [https://www.ofn.org/what-is-a-cdfi/#:~:text=Community%20development%20financial%20institutions%20\(CDFIs,see%20risk%2C%20we%20see%20opportunity](https://www.ofn.org/what-is-a-cdfi/#:~:text=Community%20development%20financial%20institutions%20(CDFIs,see%20risk%2C%20we%20see%20opportunity).

52 Seed Commons at <https://seedcommons.org/>

## Technical assistance

The world of cooperatives and worker ownership has many sources of education and training, in line with the principles of cooperation established by the International Cooperative Alliance. A few examples of worker cooperative enterprises that help form and support new and existing cooperatives are given here. A list of technical support organizations for cooperatives and worker-owned businesses is provided in Appendix 4.

- **Keystone Development Center**, funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, works with emerging, start-up and established cooperatives of all types in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey and Delaware.<sup>53</sup>
- **Cleveland Owns** is an economic democracy incubator that builds cooperative businesses and leads campaigns for community control of resources. It supports five cornerstone cooperatives working in clean energy, food access, digital access, and collective purchasing.<sup>54</sup>
- **New Economy Works of West Virginia** at West Virginia State University helps worker-owned enterprises with financing and technical assistance.<sup>55</sup>
- **Co-Op Cincy** supports an interconnected network of worker-owned businesses and consumer cooperatives in Greater Cincinnati in partnership with Seed Commons.<sup>56</sup>
- **The Ohio Employee Ownership Center** works with ESOP and cooperative conversions and start-ups and focuses mainly on Ohio and the Midwest.<sup>57</sup>

## Federal Support for worker-ownership

The federal tax code provides specific incentives for worker ownership as described earlier in this report. The federal Department of Labor has launched an Employee Ownership Initiative within its Employee Benefits Security Administration. This division supports worker-owned businesses by developing a clearinghouse of information on state programs, offering training and educational material and providing technical assistance to firms that are becoming employee owned.<sup>58</sup>

Legislation to expand worker ownership is currently under consideration in Congress. Senate Bill 2515, the “Promotion and Expansion of Private Employee Ownership Act of 2023,” would make it easier for firms organized as an S corporation to sell stock to an ESOP, provide technical assistance for companies that may be interested in forming an S-ESOP, ensure that small businesses that become ESOPs retain their certification under the Small Business Administration and affirm the importance of preserving the S-ESOP structure in the Internal Revenue Code.<sup>59</sup> Advocates are working to get worker cooperatives included in the legislation.

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53 Keystone Development Center at <https://www.kdc.coop/>

54 Cleveland owns at <https://www.clevelandowns.coop/>

55 New Economy Works at <https://newwww.coop/>

56 Coop Cincy at <https://coopcincy.org/>

57 Ohio employee Ownership Center at <https://www.oeockent.org/>

58 United States Department of Labor. “Department of Labor Launches Initiative to Promote Worker-Owned Businesses, Increase Workplace Democracy, Improve Bottom Line for Many Americans.” July 10, 2023, at <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/ebsa/ebsa20230710>

59 Kovaleski, Dave, “Sens. Cardin, Daines introduce bill to foster growth of S corporations in ESOPs,” Financial Regulation News, July 28, 2023 at <https://financialregnews.com/sens-cardin-daines-introduce-bill-to-foster-growth-of-s-corporations-in-esops/>

## Examples: Companies

There were 612 worker cooperatives in the United States in 2022<sup>60</sup> and 6533 ESOPs.<sup>61</sup> Several examples of worker-owned firms are given below.

**Isthmus** – This Wisconsin-based engineering and manufacturing firm produces automation technology for sectors ranging from consumer to medical to industrial products. It is a worker cooperative with 40 worker-members and operates with participatory management.<sup>62</sup>

**Northeast Biodiesel** was started with the help of Cooperative Power, a network of cooperative enterprises in New England. This biofuel manufacturing company produces renewable fuel from recycled cooking oil. It operates a circular manufacturing model, with cooperative relations among both suppliers and producers. Primary ownership of Northeast Diesel is being transferred from the start-up capital provided by Cooperative Power to the worker-members of the company.<sup>63</sup>

**Energia**, an employee-owned firm from Massachusetts, works in the construction and financing of energy efficiency, providing building performance upgrades for homes, apartments, dorms, town buildings and commercial structures and bringing utility and public incentives and financing to the table.<sup>64</sup>

**LEFCO Worthington** is an 80% employee-owned firm that produces wood shipping containers and pallets. It is part of the Evergreen network of cooperatives.<sup>65</sup>

**Berry Insulation** is another member of the Cleveland-based Evergreen Cooperative network of companies. It provides insulation and weatherization services.<sup>66</sup>



LEFCO Worthington (LW Cooperative) is an industry-leading manufacturer of engineered custom wood crates and heavy-duty skids for international shipping.

LEFCO Worthington joined the Evergreen Cooperative network in April 2023 and quickly became 80% employee owned.

## Appalachian firms and initiatives

Farming businesses have long cooperated on shared services. Today Appalachia is starting to see networks of firms in many industries share services in a cooperative manner to enhance efficiency and lower cost.

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60 Aspen Institute at <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/building-and-sustaining-worker-cooperatives-in-the-us/#:~:text=Compared%20to%20the%20rest%20of,worker%20cooperatives%20in%20the%20country.>

61 National Employee Ownership Center, February 2024 at <https://www.nceo.org/articles/employee-ownership-by-the-numbers#:~:text=Employee%20Stock%20Ownership-,How%20Many%20ESOPs%20Are%20There%3F,assets%20of%20over%20%242.1%20trillion.>

62 Isthmus Engineering at <https://www.isthmusengineering.com/>

63 Northeast Biodiesel <https://www.northeastbiodiesel.com/>; the information on the shift to worker ownership was provided in an interview with Christina Clamp on 1/26/2024

64 Energia. "Overview." <https://www.energiaus.com/overview>

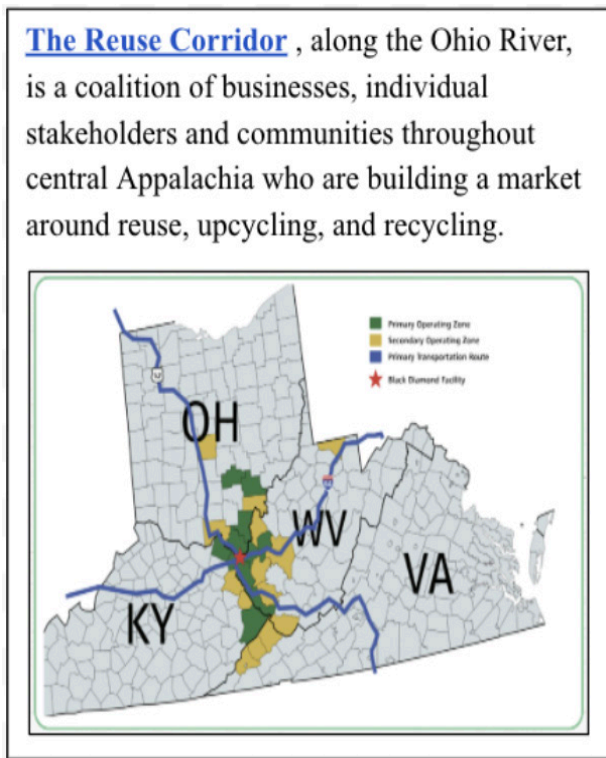
65 LEFCO Worthington at <http://www.lefcoworthington.com/>

66 Karen Kahn. "Evergreen's Fund for Employee Ownership Acquires Berry Insulation." Fifty by Fifty, March 18, 2020. <https://www.fiftybyfifty.org/2020/03/evergreens-fund-for-employee-ownership-acquires-berry-insulation/>

Reuse Corridor runs throughout the ReImagine footprint. It is led by the non-profit Coalfield Development and brings together businesses, waste disposal jurisdictions and others to identify ways of reusing waste materials for alternative production and reuse.<sup>67</sup>

Opportunity Threads, a North Carolina based worker cooperative established in 2015, has supported a

network of firms in a growing industrial park that features a set of companies linked through the reuse and recycling of waste materials into new products. This form networked manufacturing based on deliberate physical proximity is sometimes referred to as ‘circular manufacturing.’<sup>68</sup>



## Appalachian Producers Cooperative

The new Appalachian Producers Cooperative in Washington County, Tennessee brings together farmers to process locally raised meats. It will supply local consumers, grocers and restaurants and fulfill the need for more local meat processing.<sup>69</sup> In addition to promoting urban-rural partnerships and more sustainable food systems, this producers’ cooperative also reduces greenhouse gasses associated with transporting goods from long distances.

## Recommendations to encourage cooperative enterprise

**This paper documents numerous advantages of the cooperative model. Therefore, regional and national policies should foster the growth of this model in Appalachia and other underinvested regions of the country.** Government policies can and should support the development of worker cooperatives. Because such corporate governance anchors capital and creates good jobs, many states and cities have developed targeted economic development policies to support cooperatives.<sup>70</sup>

There are many ways public policy can foster an environment in which cooperatives develop and flourish, including:

- **Create offices of cooperative enterprise** within state governments that support and link cooperatives to financing, training, legal expertise, and other needs. This should be part of the

67 Coalfield Development. “Reuse Corridor.” <https://coalfield-development.org/reuse-corridor/>

68 Frances Nguyen. “An Appalachian Model for Regenerating Place-Based Community Wealth.” Next City, May 9, 2023. <https://nextcity.org/features/an-appalachian-model-for-regenerating-place-based-community-wealth>. <https://nextcity.org/features/an-appalachian-model-for-regenerating-place-based-community-wealth>

69 Appalachian Producers Cooperative. “The Appalachian Producers Cooperative’s Meat Processing Facility for Locally Raised Livestock.” 2023. <https://www.wjhl.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2023/01/APC-Factsheet.pdf>.

70 A set of state level programs and policies may be found at the website: “Becoming Employee Owned.” Becoming Employee Owned: A Small Business Toolkit at <https://becomingemployeeowned.org/topic/policy-supports/>

economic development toolkit of every state, coordinating with small business assistance centers through business attraction and retention and expansion programs. A toolkit on policies to establish such offices is offered by the Democracy at Work Initiative and the National League of Cities' "The Municipal Playbook for Employee Ownership."<sup>71</sup> A state office could be structured to support such offices at the local level.

- **Expand financial support** for worker-owned enterprises and shared service platforms using federal, philanthropic, and bank investments (the latter mandated by the Community Reinvestment Act) to create revolving loan funds, loan guarantees, and grant programs.
- **Target local, state, and federal tax incentives** to assist cooperative enterprises and shared service platforms.<sup>72</sup> State and federal level tax incentives should be studied and if necessary, reconfigured in the best structure to encourage and maximize the anchoring of good jobs and services in American communities through worker-owned businesses.
- **Give workers and/or communities a right of first refusal** to buy businesses that are put up for sale or threatened with closure. A right of first refusal grants employees the right to convert an enterprise into a worker cooperative when an owner decides to sell the business. When the owner decides to sell, the employees have a time within which only they can bid to purchase the business. This measure has been considered by Congress in the past and should be pursued at the present.
- **Formalize training for cooperative management and participation.** Examples of the type of training institution that can support development of cooperative enterprises include the Mondragon-affiliated "Team Academy," started in 1993 with a focus on entrepreneurship, fostering of networks, connections with innovation labs, experience with the newest entrepreneurial methodologies, and interaction with new markets.<sup>73</sup> The Mondragon University Cooperative University itself, founded in 1997, ensures a workforce with the training to work in and manage a cooperative enterprise.<sup>74</sup> Noteworthy programs in North America include the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Wisconsin, Madison.<sup>75</sup>
- **Target local, state, and federal renewable incentives to energy cooperatives.** A legacy of zombie coal mines,<sup>76</sup> shuttered coal plants and communities left reeling by massive job losses, loss of tax base and blighted properties due to the downshift in the coal industry are some of the byproducts of investor-owned enterprises in the extractive industries. Community-controlled entities can be expected to do better.
- **Give preference to cooperative and worker-owned enterprises in procurement and contracting.** Policymakers at all levels of government can encourage preferential procurement and contracting processes for locally-controlled cooperative enterprises.

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71 National League of Cities and the Democracy at work Initiative, "The Municipal Playbook for Employee Ownership." at <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/how-us-cities-can-help-local-businesses-convert-to-employee-ownership>

72 Pathways to a People's Economy. "Develop corporate structures and incentives that encourage growth." <https://peopleseconomy.org/develop-corporate-structures-and-incentives-that-encourage-growth/>.

73 Christina A. Clamp and Colleen Tapley. Chapter 26: Education, in Yi, Llchong (ed), Encyclopedia of the Social and Solidarity Economy – A Collective Work of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on SSE (UNFSSE) | Elgar Online: The online content platform for Edward Elgar Publishing at <https://www.elgaronline.com/display/book/9781803920924/book-part-9781803920924-40.xml>

74 Mondragon Unibertsitatea. "Mondragon University Cooperative University." <https://www.mondragon.edu/en/international-mobility/mondragon-university-cooperative-university>.

75 Clame & Tepley, Op.Cit.

76 Zombie mines are often technically active under the law but have not been used for extraction for months or years, and due to lack of maintenance, they may be at risk for leaks that can do major environmental damage to the surrounding area. See Budryk, Zach, "Congressional Democrats ask for review of environmental threat from 'zombie' coal mines," The Hill, 10/20/23 at <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/4267410-john-fetterman-house-democrats-zombie-coal-mines-environmental-threat-review/>

# Conclusion

Appalachia fueled the industrial might of America through the resources of our land and the labor of our people. Far too much of the wealth our workers created did not benefit the region long term. The rise of the new energy economy, supported by the stick of climate danger and the carrot of federal incentives, opens new possibilities for the region and provides a once in a generation chance to explore how we can do development that benefits workers, communities, and the environment in the long term.

Central Appalachia remains at the heart of the dense power structure, connected to the East Coast and the Midwest, giving our region particular leverage in shaping how our nation shapes our clean energy future.

New approaches to economic development can grow jobs, create strong labor standards, build communities, stabilize families, and solve the problems of poverty and ill health that persist in the region. Central Appalachia can build on a strong history of rural cooperative relations, and particularly the cooperative electric power structure, to anchor the wealth of the new and rising economy at home.

Worker ownership, cooperative enterprises, and shared service platforms and networks are part of that new system of economic structure that can forge that anchor and contribute to a more prosperous future that works for all of us.



# Appendix 1: Types of Cooperatives

Cooperatives are owned by their members, which could be workers, consumers, producers, farmers, businesses, municipalities, and/or other cooperatives. They are often categorized by type of membership that owns the cooperative. Most of these links are to the website of the Center for Cooperatives at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.<sup>77</sup>

**Worker-owned cooperatives** are the organizational format that is frequently front of mind when the word “Cooperative” comes up in reference to a economic entity that operates in a democratic fashion. A worker-cooperative is owned by the employees that choose to pay the membership fee and become a worker owner.

**Housing Cooperatives** are described by Realtor.com at the link provided. Residents of a housing cooperative live in an apartment building owned by a corporation or not-for-profit in which they have purchased shares or paid a membership fee. They pay operating and maintenance costs monthly. If they move, they or the company sell their shares or membership to an approved buyer (the cooperative may be democratically structured with all residents approving new members).

**Electric Cooperatives** are common in rural areas. The Ohio State University’s Appalachian Cooperative Initiative discusses the story of electric cooperatives halfway down the page on the linked website. It highlights how the rural electric cooperative community built connections among local cooperatives, state, and national organizations. Today there are over 900 rural electric Cooperatives that serve over half of the nation’s landmass.<sup>78</sup>

**Producer Cooperatives** are owned by people who produce similar types of goods or services. The members use the cooperative to negotiate prices and to access larger markets. The cooperative can further process member products to add value and increase producer returns. Some producer cooperatives also pool member demand for production inputs to obtain better pricing for those inputs. Many agricultural cooperatives provide both types of services to their members.

**Purchasing Cooperatives** combine member demand to collectively leverage better pricing, availability, and delivery of products or services. The members are businesses or organizations that use the cooperative to manage their operations more efficiently. The NCBA/CLUSA (National Cooperative Business Association) reports that “The earliest example of group purchasing was Benjamin Franklin’s mutual insurance company, ‘The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insuring of Houses from Loss by Fire.’ Franklin and his friends formed the group as democratically run by its members, who shared equally in any gains or losses.” Purchasing Cooperatives are used by hospitals, independent retail stores, farm supply cooperatives and educational institutions. Examples include: Ace Hardware, Carpet One, Independent Pharmacy Cooperative.

**Consumer Cooperatives** use the cooperative to purchase goods or services, providing certain benefits (better availability, selection, pricing, or delivery of products or services) to individual consumers. This type of cooperative format includes but is not limited to credit unions, grocery Cooperatives, telephone and electrical distribution, housing, and childcare. Some examples of consumer cooperatives include REI, UW Credit Union, Willy Street Cooperative, Adams-Columbia Electric Cooperative, Madison Community Cooperative.

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<sup>77</sup> University of Wisconsin at Madison Center for Cooperatives at <https://uwcc.wisc.edu/>

<sup>78</sup> On the history of electrical cooperatives emergence in and after the New Deal, see also, Christopher Ali, *Farm Fresh Broadband: The Politics of Rural Connectivity*, MIT Press, 2021.

**Multi-Stakeholder cooperatives** are owned by two or more types of member classes who have both connected and competing interests in an enterprise that more broadly benefits them all. Member classes may include consumers (either individuals or businesses), producers, workers, or investors. The individual members may include cooperatives but may also be conventionally organized enterprises.

**Shared services cooperatives**, also referred to as ‘platform’ or ‘second level’ enterprises, shared service cooperatives typically aggregate demand for a broadly needed set of shared goods and services needed by members. These goods and services can include (among other items) office supplies, payroll and health care services, and training and education. The members of shared service cooperatives may be conventional businesses or cooperatives themselves. Shared service agreements, common with and among in corporate structures (subsidiaries and joint ventures) can be especially important to firms in new sectors, like renewable energy.<sup>79</sup> Such mutually beneficial relationships among participants can mitigate risk as well as cut costs.

## Appendix 2: Technical Assistance

A selection of trade associations and technical assistance programs in Appalachia for cooperative enterprises and worker ownership. There are more, but this is a good starting point:

- [Keystone Development Center \(KDC\)](#). KDC works with emerging, start-up and established cooperatives and businesses throughout the [Mid-Atlantic Region](#).
- The Ohio State University, College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, [Center for Cooperatives](#) creates and extends knowledge to emerging and existing cooperatives in Ohio and beyond by supporting learning, development, and research.
- [Co-Op Cincy](#) supports an interconnected network of worker-owned businesses and consumer cooperatives in Greater Cincinnati in partnership with with Seed Commons.
- [The Ohio Employee Ownership Center](#) works with ESOP and cooperative conversions and start-ups and focuses mainly on Ohio and the Midwest. It is presently helping to structure four worker co-op start-ups.
- [Mountain Association \(KY\)](#) is a Community Development Financial Institution nonprofit helping communities create a more diverse, sustainable, equitable, and resistant economy in Eastern Kentucky.
- [Pennsylvania Ownership Center](#) supplies educational resources to promote a greater understanding of the values of employee ownership to a variety of businesses and other groups in Pennsylvania.
- [New Economy Works of West Virginia](#) – West Virginia State University. NEW WV has a mission to identify, support, and finance self-governing cooperative businesses in West Virginian communities that have been economically extracted.
- [Ohio and Kentucky Chapter of the ESOP Association](#) provide educational and networking

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<sup>79</sup> McKinsey and Company describe how mutually beneficial and shared services can protect joint goals: “Tools such as price hedging and long-term agreements that secure the cost of raw materials such as steel can significantly mitigate the effects of sharp price increases. The fact that wind and solar suppliers were caught off guard by the recent increases indicates that risk management capabilities are not sufficiently developed among renewable energy OEMs. Developers should work with their suppliers to jointly invest in upskilling employees in risk identification and price hedging for raw-material purchases. ....Risks and appropriate countermeasures will need to be integrated into the design of these partnerships.” <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/electric-power-and-natural-gas/our-insights/renewable-energy-development-in-a-net-zero-world-disrupted-supply-chains>

opportunities to its association consisting of over 230 ESOP companies and providers across Ohio and Kentucky.

- Smeal College of Business at the Pennsylvania State University – See Building a Successful Co-Op Education Program: “Building a Successful Co-op Education Program Playbook for Partner Employers.”
- Broadband Cooperatives (West Virginia) West Virginia Broadband Enhancement Council’s guide on forming broadband cooperative associations, which aims to empower communities with the resources to extend broadband access to underserved areas of the state.
- West Virginia Cooperative Purchasing Program allows eligible political subdivisions to purchase from statewide contracts and secure discounted savings.
- Southern educational Services Cooperative (West Virginia) offers counties cooperative opportunities such as adult education, alternative certification, employment and professional development services and training, cooperative purchasing, and virtual school among others.
- USDA’s Rural Cooperative Grant Program in West Virginia provides grants through an annual competitive process to help start, expand, or strengthen rural cooperatives and mutually-owned businesses by supporting Cooperative Development Centers.
- America’s Electric Cooperatives More than 900 electric cooperatives in 47 states select and sponsor students to participate in the Youth Tour leadership program.
- West Virginia’s agricultural co-ops. Agricultural cooperatives exist in every state. In West Virginia, the Southern States Cooperative focuses on providing livestock feeds, seed, farm supplies, fertilizer, and fuel to agricultural producers.
- Kentucky Center for Rural and Agricultural Development is an expert in the cooperative business structure in Kentucky, helping more than 50 cooperatives at all stages of development. Supported by the USDA cooperative development program, it offers technical assistance at little or no charge.
- Cleveland Owns Cleveland Owns is an economic democracy incubator that builds cooperative businesses and leads campaigns for community control of resources. It supports five cornerstone cooperatives working in clean energy, food access, and digital access, and collective purchasing.
- Evergreen Cooperative Network - The Evergreen Network offers financing and technical assistance to worker cooperatives. Headquartered in Cleveland, it is home to several companies, employing more than 250 workers in worker-owned cooperatives, all of which are 80% (or more) majority owned and democratically operated by their employee members.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Evergreen Cooperatives at <https://www.evgo.com/>

# Appendix 3: Sources of Funding for Worker Cooperatives

This table, with information taken from the websites cited in each row, is a sampling of some of the financing options for worker cooperatives. Many cities and some states offer their own funds, often relying on federal or philanthropic sources.

Institution	Description	Web site
Appalachian Community Capital	Our investment priorities include: downtown development, housing, manufacturing, IT, healthcare, education, food systems, clean energy, and heritage tourism and recreation — primarily in rural communities.	<a href="http://appalachiancommunitycapitalcdfi.org">appalachiancommunitycapitalcdfi.org</a>
Appalachian Community Federal Credit Union	community and economic development to underserved individuals and businesses that lack adequate access to capital, high quality financial services, and financial counseling	<a href="http://myacfcu.org">myacfcu.org</a>
Appalachian Growth Capital	Core Loan Program: small businesses gap-financing on affordable terms; Specialty and Micro Loan Programs for market niches and populations with additional barriers to accessing credit; Credit Underwriting Services; Business Financial and Credit Counseling; Assistance Placing Bank and Private Financing	<a href="http://appcap.org">appcap.org</a>
Worker ownership loan funds	Start-ups, expansions, relocations, equipment, leasehold improvements, inventory, working capital; \$5 - \$550,000	<a href="#">fund/#:~:text=The%20Worker%20Ownership%20Loan%20Fund,especially%20in%20low%2Dincome%20communiti</a>
National Cooperative Bank	Established in 1978, the National Cooperative Bank is the only bank in the U.S. dedicated to delivering nationwide banking products and solutions to cooperatives and other member-owned organizations to help communities thrive.	<a href="https://www.ncb.coop/">https://www.ncb.coop/</a>
Cooperative Fund of New England	Term loans, revolving loans and lines of credit	<a href="https://cooperativefund.org/">https://cooperativefund.org/</a>
Seed Commons	A community development finance initiative funder that interacts with other CDFIs across the nation	<a href="https://seedcommons.org/">https://seedcommons.org/</a>
New Economy Works of West Virginia	Associated with Seed Commons	<a href="https://newwww.coop/#:~:text=NEW%20WV%20is%20part%20of,Commons%20and%20the%20SRIF%20Networks.">https://newwww.coop/#:~:text=NEW%20WV%20is%20part%20of,Commons%20and%20the%20SRIF%20Networks.</a>
Patchwork Cooperative Loan Fund of Kentucky	Associated with Seed Commons	<a href="https://www.patchworkcoop.org/">https://www.patchworkcoop.org/</a>
Shared Capital Cooperative	Expansions and relocations, Leasehold improvements. Equipment, inventory, working capital, real estate acquisition or refinance, start-up, conversion to cooperative ownership. \$5 - \$5,000,000	<a href="https://sharedcapital.coop/">https://sharedcapital.coop/</a>
Local Enterprise Assistance Fund (LEAF)	Worker cooperatives are eligible	<a href="https://leafund.org/mission/">https://leafund.org/mission/</a>
Project equity	Worker cooperatives are eligible	<a href="https://project-equity.org/services/financing-and-closing-the-sale/">https://project-equity.org/services/financing-and-closing-the-sale/</a>
US Treasury State Small Business Credit Initiative	Check with your state economic development agency for details and contact; Loans up to \$5,000,000	<a href="https://ncbaclusa.coop/blog/loans-available-for-new-and-existing-worker-co-ops-through-the-u-s-treasurys-state-small-business-credit-initiative-ssbci/">https://ncbaclusa.coop/blog/loans-available-for-new-and-existing-worker-co-ops-through-the-u-s-treasurys-state-small-business-credit-initiative-ssbci/</a>

# Appendix 4:

## Resources concerning state law pertaining to cooperatives in the area with ReImagine Membership

- ▶ [National Cooperative Business Association Library at https://ncbaclusa.coop/resources/state-cooperative-statute-library/](https://ncbaclusa.coop/resources/state-cooperative-statute-library/)
- ▶ [Ohio Revised Code at https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/chapter-1729](https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/chapter-1729)
- ▶ [Pennsylvania code Title 15 - see https://law.justia.com/codes/pennsylvania/2010/title-15/chapter-71/7102](https://law.justia.com/codes/pennsylvania/2010/title-15/chapter-71/7102)  
<https://law.justia.com/codes/pennsylvania/2014/title-15/chapter-77>
- ▶ [West Virginia - West Virginia code 19-4; https://law.justia.com/codes/west-virginia/2022/chapter-19/article-4/](https://law.justia.com/codes/west-virginia/2022/chapter-19/article-4/)
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