



Mid America Cooperative Council

### Co-ops101 - Why this Core Program is Important for Cooperatives

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The Association of Cooperative Educators (ACE) honored the MACC Co-ops101 Program for excellence, in cooperative education. ACE is the international organization reaching across all business sectors and national boundaries to enhance ideas, strengthen co-ops, promote professionalism and improve public understanding of co-ops. This program is available to both MACC members and non-members.

This course describes the history, culture and nuances of the cooperative business model. Each employee will leave this program with a solid understanding of the ownership, equity-patronage and member representation structure of their cooperative. The participant will be able to explain their cooperative's advantage to members and the general public.

#### What Participating Co-ops Are Saying About the Co-ops101 Program

**Rick Butler, Sr. Learning Program Manager with Farm Credit Mid-America** says, "Farm Credit Mid-America began its' participation with MACC's excellent Co-ops101 training, in 2003. We have had the great fortune of working with Dr. Bob Cohen to help us provide a solid foundation of cooperative principles, for all of our employees. Our new team members, without a rural or farm background, gain important insight into what makes us unique in our marketplace. Our new team members who do have experience working with their local cooperatives, also gain additional insights that help them better serve our members. The fact that Dr. Cohen is an incredibly effective and fun teacher makes the training for our team members a great experience!"

**Steven McCartney, Training Coordinator with AgCredit, ACA** says "Most schools today do not cover the cooperative business model and most of our new employees are not familiar with it. We believe it is important for all of our employees to understand our business model and how it is different. The Co-ops101 course fills this knowledge gap and helps our employees effectively communicate about our business and business model with friends, family, members and prospects."

**Amy Studebaker, a Regional Vice President in Southwest Ohio, is one of many Farm Credit Mid-America** employees who has attended the Co-ops101 Program. Amy says "Every employee in our organization attends the Co-ops101 class to give them a better understanding of our structure along with the understanding of cooperative principles. As a cooperative, it is invaluable that our staff understands the organization's structure along with the understanding of cooperative principles." Seasoned leaders of Farm Credit who began their careers in the cooperative system, like Amy, have witnessed and experienced, firsthand, the benefits of MAC-Ed programs for not only their own cooperative, but for other cooperatives as well.

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**Co-ops101 Course Instructor, Bob Cohen** says "Class attendees come away with an enhanced understanding of the "big picture" of cooperatives."

Bob has spent well over a decade educating people about cooperatives. He teaches the course "Introduction to Cooperatives" at the Ohio State University, and has given workshops and presentations on cooperatives in twenty states and six foreign countries.

One student of our Co-ops101 Program sums up Bob's ability best in an evaluation summary. He stated, "Bob is an excellent speaker and trainer. He lives, eats, and drinks co-ops. It was a wonderful session."

Since March of 2007, Dr. Cohen has also served as CEO and Director of Business Assistance at Braintree Business Development Center. Braintree is a non-profit business incubator which assists business startups and emerging companies in North Central Ohio. He has served as Braintree's Executive Director, since July 2004.

### Co-ops101 Past Attendees' Comments

*"The instructor was very knowledgeable and related the material well to the class."*

*"It was a great presentation with great information."*

*"Bob kept the course very interesting, while also keeping it educational and fun, at the same time."*

*"I would recommend this course to others, it was very good."*

*"Bob was energetic and knowledgeable. He kept the audience engaged."*

*"I liked the interactive activities."*

*"The class was very informative and entertaining. The content was very helpful and useful."*

*"It was a very good program even for someone that has knowledge about co-ops."*

*"The workshop provided a good foundation to the understanding of a cooperative."*

*"It was very beneficial and by the end of the course, I feel that I learned useful information."*

### **The 2017 National Institute of Cooperative Education at the University of Kentucky is scheduled for June 27-June 29, 2017.**

Some of the highlights of the conference include campus tours, workshops on leadership development, an entrepreneurship panel, and corporation and cooperative board cases with an opportunity to win college scholarships. The cost of the conference is 175.00 per person. Please find a tentative agenda at <http://macc.coop/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/2017-YS-Program-Tentative-1.pdf>, and if you have any questions please email Quentin Tyler at [Quentin.tyler@uky.edu](mailto:Quentin.tyler@uky.edu).



**This issue of the MACC Voice focuses on our award winning Co-ops101 program.** This program explains cooperative basics to employees and directors. The Fifth Cooperative Principle: "Education, Information, and Training" recognizes the importance of knowledgeable employees, directors and members for a smooth running cooperative.

I am, currently, reading a good book on leadership by Simon Sinek, called "Leaders Eat Last". Sinek explains why we need to feel a sense of accomplishment . . . "That feeling of fulfillment, those lasting feelings of happiness and loyalty, all require engagement with others." Cooperatives bring people with common needs together to accomplish what they cannot as individuals. Cooperatives are more than businesses that provide products and services, they were started by people with a common need that was only fulfilled by "**pulling together as one**".

Yes, we have a sense of accomplishment when we make a profit, produce quality products or services; however, when we understand the challenges of our forefathers and how they were solved through a cooperative, we have a much greater respect and understanding of our heritage. The feeling of being a part of something quite bigger than we are as individuals, will build a culture of loyalty in our cooperatives. Loyalty is merely being faithful to that which has supported us in times of need.

The culture that sustains our cooperatives relies on this mutual trust between member/owners, employees, and the elected board of directors. They are all of the same community, supporting each other, having each other's backs; and pulling for the whole group rather than themselves. Cooperatives have a greater sense of accomplishment by supporting the common good and building a better relationship with each member/owner. There are many stories of a team of horses pulling greater loads together, collectively, than they can individually. It is true in nature and it is true with people, building that bond of trust and personal accountability to each other. With cooperatives, it is natural teamwork because they are self-governed and work for the greater good. Working as a larger team means having greater leverage in the world market, and the ability to compete against much larger businesses, just by being members of a cooperative.

Honor the trust the founding fathers of your cooperative had in each other, with a co-ops101 class that explains the rich heritage of your cooperative and other cooperatives. Your employees and directors are already representatives of your cooperative, in their local community. Give them the tools necessary to be the best they can be at understanding and explaining the unique cooperative structure.

**The Co-ops101 program** explains that a cooperative is more than just a business, it is a relationship of owners who control their own business and trust other owners to support what is best for their cooperatives. Member/owners share in the profits, and also share in the sense of accomplishment by being a part of something local that has regional, national and sometimes international presence.

**If you are interested in holding a Co-ops101 class for your cooperative, or would like to send your employees to an currently scheduled class, please send us an email at [knowledge@macc.coop](mailto:knowledge@macc.coop).**