



Co-op Curriculum

Grades 6-8

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LESSON 1

What are cooperatives and how does teamwork make their dream work?

OBJECTIVE

Campers will understand the benefits of working as a team and how cooperative businesses use similar values to help their community

MATERIALS

- Text about Rochdale, Cooperatives, and Maps, something to write with
- For each group (no more than 5 campers per group)
- Sturdy table
- 1 marshmallow
- 20 spaghetti noodles (uncooked)
- 1 yard of tape (masking works best)
- 1 yard of string
- 1 pair of scissors
- Enough marshmallows so that every camper can snack on one later (this discourages kids from eating the one marshmallow they have in their group)
- Yardstick for measuring the project
- A prize for the winning team
- Timer (ideally visible to everyone but shouting out the remaining minutes as you go is fine)

OUTLINE

- **Marshmallow Challenge**
(25 minutes)
- **Measurement and Debrief**
(10 minutes)
- **Rochdale and Cooperatives 101**
(25 minutes)

PREPARATION

Make sure camp staff has watched the Marshmallow Challenge video ahead of time—it is a bit of an abstract concept until you have done it a few times or seen it, so it will be easier to provide a reasonable amount of support if staff have a clear vision for how it should go. Ideally the Marshmallow Challenge should take place indoors because it is easier to keep track of materials and keep things organized. Make sure you have prepped enough materials for each group and that groups have enough space to work separate from other groups.

FLOW

1. Marshmallow Challenge

- Bring the whole group together for the rules and expectations for the challenge.
- Frame this challenge to the campers as an opportunity to work together.
- Explain the guidelines for the challenge. Take questions. Try to limit the amount of “what-if?” questions. Have campers remind each other about how to be a good teammate. Each group is building one thing, so they should be thinking ahead of time about how to communicate, take turns, and stay positive.
- Key expectations to keep in mind: campers must stay with their group and counselors should not support the building of the structures

Essential Rules of the Marshmallow Challenge:

- **Build the Tallest Freestanding Structure:** The winning team is the one that has the tallest structure measured from the tabletop surface to the top of the marshmallow. That means the structure cannot be suspended from a higher structure, like a chair, ceiling, or chandelier (This last point is important since there are so many chandeliers at campgrounds).
 - **The Entire Marshmallow Must Be On Top:** The entire marshmallow needs to be on the top of the structure. Cutting or eating part of the marshmallow disqualifies the team.
 - **Use as Much or as Little of the Kit:** Team can use as many or as few of the 20 spaghetti sticks, as much or as little of the tape.
 - **Break up the Spaghetti, String or Tape:** Teams are free to break the spaghetti and to cut up the tape and string to create new structures.
 - **The Challenge Lasts 18 minutes:** Teams cannot hold on to the structure when the time runs out. Those touching or supporting the structure at the end of the exercise will be disqualified.
- Once campers are in place, start the 18 minute timer and make sure that counselors are there to support and encourage but not to do any of the work.
 - Do time check ins every 5 minutes or so

2. Measurement and Debrief

When the timer goes off, counselors are responsible for making sure campers step away from their structure. Some structures may tip over because they are not sturdy enough—that's okay and is a learning opportunity.

One leader should go around to each structure and measure it and declare a winner.

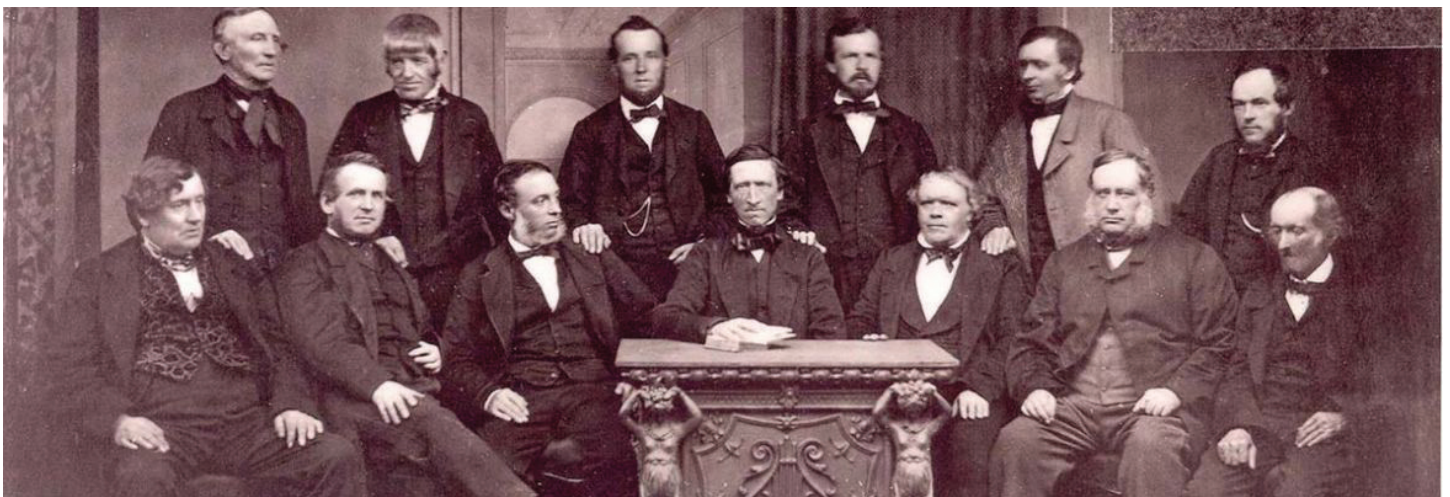
Debrief the experience:

- What was the most challenging part of that process?
- Share about someone in your group who was being a good teammate. What did they do that showed teamwork and cooperation?
- How did teamwork make the dream work?
- If you had to do the challenge over tomorrow, what would you do differently?

Wrap up: Clean up and make sure everyone gets a marshmallow to eat!

3. Rochdale and Cooperatives 101

- Get into small groups for this part of the lesson
- Tell campers that we are going to be learning about businesses that really value teamwork and cooperation. The same values you all showed during the Marshmallow Challenge. In fact, their teamwork literally makes the dream (of having a thriving business and satisfied customers) work.
- Read the text about Rochdale as a group
- Note the maps: The first map shows where the Rochdale Pioneers founded the first successful cooperative. The second map shows the various types of cooperatives now found in the US. Ask campers why they think cooperative businesses and ideals have spread so far.
- Next, go over the different types of cooperatives. See if campers can come up with actual business examples for each type. Campers need to be comfortable with Marketing, Supply, and Producer vocabulary.
- Have campers show what they know in writing or by discussing their thoughts with the group.



THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

There are many records of cooperatives that started out as small grassroots organizations in Western Europe, North America and Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century, however, it is the Rochdale Pioneers that are generally seen as the prototype of the modern cooperative society and the founders of the Co-operative Movement in 1844.

The Rochdale Pioneers

In 1844 a group of 28 artisans working in the cotton mills in the town of Rochdale, in the north of England established the first modern cooperative business, the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society. The weavers faced miserable working conditions and low wages, and they could not afford the high prices of food and household goods. They decided that by pooling their scarce resources and working together they could access basic goods at a lower price. At first, there were only four items for sale: flour, oatmeal, sugar and butter.

The Pioneers decided it was time shoppers were treated with honesty, openness and respect, that they should be able to share in the profits that their custom contributed to and that they should have a democratic right to have a say in the business. Every customer of the shop became a member and so had a true stake in the business. At first the cooperative was open for only two nights a week, but within three months, business had grown so much that it was open five days a week.

Since then the model has grown into other sectors and inspired the growth of farming, financial, and many other types of cooperatives across the world.



Producer

Producer cooperatives are created by producers and owned & operated by producers. Producers can decide to work together or as separate entities to help increase marketing possibilities and production efficiency. They are organized to process, market, and distribute their own products. This helps lessen costs and strains in each area with a mutual benefit to each producer. *Examples: agricultural products, lumber, carpentry and crafts.*



Service

Service cooperatives are a type of "consumer cooperative" which help to fill a need in the community. They allow consumers the opportunity to supply their own needs, gain bargaining power, and share earnings. They are organized to give members more control over the services that are offered. *Examples: service co-ops such as child care, health care clinics, and funeral services.*

Housing

Housing cooperatives are a type of service cooperative which provide a unique form of home ownership. They allow home owners the opportunity to share costs of home ownership (or building). They are formed by people who wish to provide and jointly own their housing. The units in a housing co-op are owned by the cooperatives and cannot be sold for profit. *Examples include: condominiums, rentals, single family homes.*



Retail

Retail Cooperatives are a type of "consumer cooperative" which help create retail stores to benefit the consumers—making the retail “our store”. They allow consumers the opportunity to supply their own needs, gain bargaining power, and share earnings. They are organized as communities, or other “local groups”, owning their own retail stores. Retail cooperatives are often found in small communities where local businesses have shut down. *Examples: hardware, food, agriculture products, and even movie theaters.*

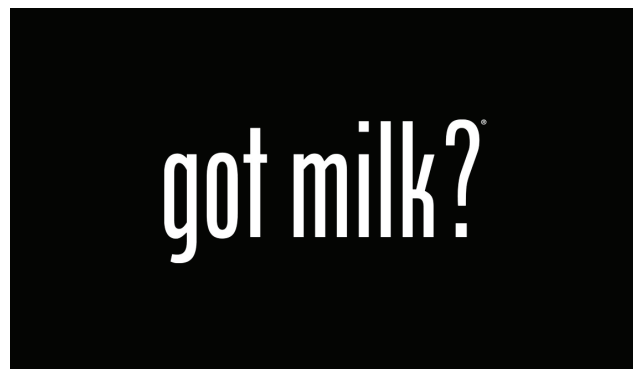


Worker

Members of worker cooperatives are both employees of the business as well as owners of the cooperative. This is one of the fastest growing segments of cooperatively-owned businesses. Possibilities for being organized as a worker cooperative include: New business start-ups, entrepreneurs sharing highs & lows of business, or a conversion of existing businesses. *Examples: bakeries, retail stores, software development groups, and aquaculture.*

Marketing

Combining the efforts of an entire industry into one marketing campaign benefits everyone in the industry, even if they're competing for the same dollar. The “Got Milk?” campaign devised by the California Milk Processor Board, for example, serves all milk processors and dairy farmers, including competing brands. Complementary companies, as well as direct competitors, can create effective and mutually beneficial cooperative marketing campaigns



LESSON 2

WHAT PRINCIPLES DO COOPERATIVES VALUE?

OBJECTIVE

Campers will demonstrate an understanding of the cooperative principles.

OUTLINE

- Cooperative Principles Song
(5 minutes)
- Cooperative Principles Jigsaw Preparation
(25 minutes)
- Cooperative Principles Jigsaw Presentation
(25 minutes)

MATERIALS

- **Whatever your groups decide to use for principles presentations**
- Props, Art Supplies, Musical Instruments, Writing Materials

PREPARATION

Counselors should have an idea ahead of time about the type of presentation they want to help their campers prepare. Jigsaw presentations are useful when dealing with many concepts. Additionally, the counselors performing the song should have watched the video several times so they can really own the performance.



FLOW

1. Cooperative Principles Song

Have two counselors perform the song to introduce the cooperative principles to the whole group.

2. Cooperative Principal Jigsaw Preparation

- Before splitting up into seven groups explain to the campers that cooperative businesses follow seven principles that guide how they operate. Campers will split into groups and become experts on one of the principles so they can prepare an engaging way of teaching the rest of the camp about that principle
- Each counselor should take a principle and their group and spend the next 20-30 minutes discussing what the principle means, brainstorming an engaging way of presenting it that involves all members of the group, and practicing it. Some ideas: skit, song, chant, art. Be creative!

3. Cooperative Principle Jigsaw Presentations

Bring the groups back together and prepare to be respectful and supportive audience members. Have each group present!



Cooperative Principle Jigsaw Presentations

1. Open and Voluntary Membership — Membership in a cooperative is open to all people who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender, or economic circumstances.

2. Democratic Member Control — Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (directors/trustees) are elected among the membership and are accountable to them. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote); cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

3. Members' Economic Participation — Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative; setting up reserves; 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 as well as their unique identity.

5. Education, Training, and Information — Education and training for members, elected representatives (directors/trustees), CEOs, and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Communications about the nature and benefits of cooperatives, particularly with the general public and opinion leaders, help boost cooperative understanding.

6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives — By working together through local, national, regional and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs.

7. Concern for Community — Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.



The 7 Cooperative Principles Song

Scene: Two strangers are waiting at a bus stop. One of them has a cool guitar...

Jen: Hey, cool guitar

Musician: Thanks. Did you know that cooperatives all around the world follow the seven cooperative principles?

J: No, actually I didn't.

M: It sets them apart from other financial institutions and benefits their members. So you know you've made the right choice in this crazy mixed up world we live in. And that's because...

Starting to sing

*"They are open, understanding, and there's no discrimination,
If you're doing fine or need help with your credit situation,
And the members call the shots because CUs are so pragmatic,
Every member gets a vote to keep things nice and democratic,*

*The seven cooperative principles
Will guide you right along,
The credit union helps me sing this song
In a credit union members stand to gain from any profit."*

J: So, if it does well that means better rates on my deposits?

M: Yup! As financial co-ops sharing is the key to their foundation
And they strive to keep their members well-informed

J: That's education!

Together: The seven cooperatives principles will guide you right along

J: I don't know how I know the words to this song?

M: They will go the extra mile just to lend a helping hand, which...

J: Goes together nicely like my ham and pickle sandwich

M: Not exactly, I was talking more about working together, both locally and globally,

J: To make the co-op movement better.

Together: The seven cooperative principles will guide you right along. The credit union helps me sing this song

M: The community's important to the credit union's mission. Its focus is on members with its every decision

J: You could say that serving others is its primary ambition...

Bus arrives

M: The bus is here to pick up this enlightening musician

J: The bus is here...what wait?

M: The bus is here!

M: Hello Mr. Driver all my change is in pocket

J: Well, that was weird Takes a bite of sandwich

J: Hmm, needs more pickles.



LESSON 3

HOW DO COOPERATIVES GROW AND HELP THEIR COMMUNITY?

OBJECTIVE

Campers will deepen their understanding of the way cooperative businesses have changed over time and their benefits.

OUTLINE

- Rural Wi-Fi Article
(15 minutes)
- Rochdale vs ICA Principles
(15 minutes)
- Final Project and Gallery Walk
(30 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Rural Wi-Fi Article
- Rochdale vs. ICA Principles and Venn Diagram
- Materials for Final Projects
(writing, art, comic sheet)

PREPARATION

Have articles printed out. Have the Principles cards printed and sorted (ideally printed on cardstock). Have the Venn Diagram printed. Since this all going to be done in small groups, make sure all the materials are divided and ready to go.



FLOW

1. Rural Wi-Fi Article

Split up into small groups. Ask campers to remind the group of the cooperative principles and types of cooperatives.

Bring their attention to the article—they are going to learn about one specific cooperative and how it contributes to its community. Stop and discuss the text as you go along.

- After “profitable,” **Why do you think this was?** (May need to discuss what it means for something to be “profitable”)

Possible Responses:

- *Most companies are based in big cities*
- *Setting up power for rural areas would mean building a lot of pipes and wires and that might be too expensive.*

- After “library” **Is this your experience where you live? Where do you get wi-fi from?**

Possible Responses:

- *Kids may share that they have home access, some may not*
- *Good opportunity for kids in the group to connect and talk about their experiences with internet access*

- After “connections” **Choose one of those benefits from the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Coop laying cable. Why is that a big deal in rural communities?**

Possible Responses:

- *The factory gives the town good paying options so people will want to stay in the town and work*
- *Schools giving Chromebooks to kids will help them learn at home and get experience navigating the web*
- *Telemedicine means that sick people can get help from home*
- *It’s more convenient to have internet access at home than going to the local library*

- After “dollars coming” **What does this mean for your own social media? Open up space to talk about ads on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.**

Possible Responses:

- *Lots of social media apps have ads and misinformation, this is bad because kids can get the wrong idea about groups of people*
- *If Coops did their own form of social media they may not have to sell ads*
- *Members could have more influence on what the social media service is used for*

- After finishing the article **What is the author saying co-ops are capable of in the tech world?**

Possible Responses:

- *They push other companies to provide service or make service more affordable*
- *They can help change the way companies and social media operate*



2. Rochdale vs ICA Principles

The purpose of this activity is to compare and contrast the principles as originally written by the Rochdale Pioneers and see how they are similar and different to the current international principles.

- Tell your campers that one of the reasons cooperatives are able to be involved in 21st century business even though cooperatives were founded in the 1800s is because their principles have evolved.
- Pass out the ICA Principles and have campers read aloud as a refresher from the previous lesson.
- Then pass out the original Rochdale Principles and have campers read aloud. Answer any questions campers may have about those principles.
- After each principle has been read ask campers if they see any principles that are essentially the same and place them in the center of the Venn Diagram. Push campers to give clear explanation of why the principles are similar
- Individual group responses might be slightly different but your diagram should look like this similar to the example Venn Diagram included in your materials.
- Important to note that just because a Rochdale Principle isn't mentioned explicitly in the updated principles does not mean that cooperatives no longer adhere to it. For example: "full weight and measure given" isn't explicitly stated in the update principles because in the modern economy this is a given expectation for all businesses.



3. Final Project and Gallery Walk

Tell campers that they are now going to have an opportunity to show what they have learned about cooperatives. This is a chance to be creative and have fun with really important knowledge. They are going to make a final project and other campers are going to come and see what they came up with and they will have a chance to do their own “gallery walk” to see what campers in other groups did as well. Give campers the option of working on these final projects alone or in small groups.

Final projects could cover any of the following:

- Include several cooperative principles
- Tell the story of the Rochdale Pioneers
- Demonstrate the importance of cooperatives to local communities

Some potential final project ideas:

- Work on a comic (could be bound and sent home with memory books?)
- Song/Poem
- Play/Skit
- Artwork
- “Write your cooperative story” about this week’s camp co-op in a news article format.
- Any of these finished pieces could be saved by the camp and bound and sent home with memory books. They could also be submitted to stories.coop which is affiliated with the International Cooperative Alliance and publishes cooperatives stories on their website.
- Give campers time and resources to work. Have groups take turns checking out each other’s projects.



INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE PRINCIPLES

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.

Education, Training, and Information

Co-operatives 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 co-operation.

Cooperation among Cooperatives

Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

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.

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.

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 use surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

Concern for Community

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.



ROCHDALE PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

Capital Should Be of Their Own Providing

Members are the ones funding the cooperative.

Profits Should Be Divided pro rata Upon the Amount of Purchases Made by Each Member

Profits are split up between the members based on the amount of purchases each member makes. More purchases = more profit given back.

Management Should Be in the Hands of Officers and an Elected Committee

The people who run the cooperative must be members and a leadership committee should be voted on by the members.

One Member, One Vote and Equal Membership for Men and Women

No matter how much a member has invested they have the same vote as anyone else. Men and women have equal memberships.

Full Weight and Measure Should Be Given

Cooperatives must agree to give their customers an accurate and fair measurement of goods and supplies.

Market Prices Should Be Charged and No Credit Given Nor Asked

Prices should be fair and customers can only pay with the money they actually have and not use credit.

A Percentage of Profits Should Be Used for Education

Some profits must be used to educate others about cooperatives.

Frequent Statements and Balance Sheets Should Be Presented to Members

Members should frequently be getting updates on how the cooperative is doing financially.

Only the Purest Goods Will Be Supplied to Members

Good and supplies will be high quality and made of pure materials.



Rochdale

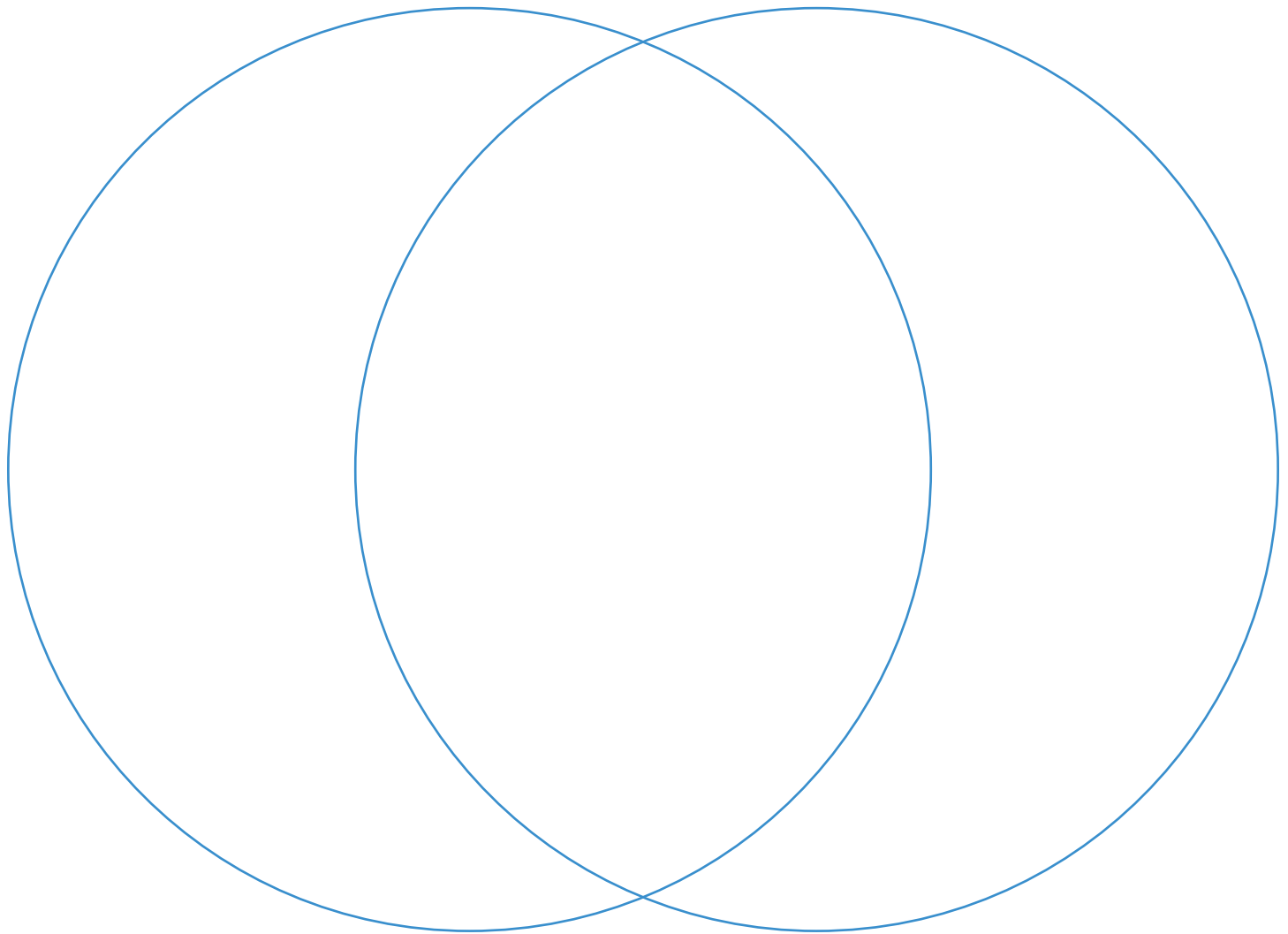
- Market prices should be charged
- Full weight and measure should be given
- Only the purest goods
- Frequent Statements

Both

- Democratic Member Control/One Member One Vote/Management in the Hands of Elected Committee/
- Open Membership
- Education
- Member Economic Participation/Capital should be of their own providing/Profits Divided

ICA

- Concern for Community
- Autonomy and Independence
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives





Back in the early 1930s, farmers couldn't get wired. The big-city electric utilities claimed that delivering power to customers spread out in rural areas wasn't profitable. So eventually the locals rolled up their sleeves and did it themselves. They formed electric co-ops and strung their own wires, aided by cheap federal loans. Today there are nearly 900 rural co-ops still providing their communities with electricity. A DIY success story!

Now history repeats itself—with broadband. Thirty-nine percent of rural Americans had no access to home broadband in 2016 (compared with 4 percent of folks in urban areas), because big telcos say it's too expensive to build affordable fiber-optic broadband in the countryside. Residents have to make do with dialup or Wi-Fi from a library.

So co-ops are solving the problem again. In rural Oklahoma, for example, the Northeast Oklahoma Electric Cooperative recently laid 2,497 miles of fiber-optic cable—a feat that required blasting through some bedrock—to launch its broadband Bolt Fiber Optic Services. Today Bolt serves almost 9,000 members, offering gigabit connections for less than you'd pay for comparable service in a city.

As for the local impact? "It's been huge," Ricky Hignite, Bolt's director of IT, tells me. The rollout of broadband meant that an aerospace factory with the potential of 100 good-paying jobs was able to open in Grove, Oklahoma (population 7,060) in 2016. Area schools are handing out Chromebooks, doctors are exploring telemedicine, and people no longer need to hoof it to a library for faster connections.

In one sense, this is merely a story about how to end the rural-urban digital divide: Don't rely on big corporations, and instead help locals band together with the kind of government grants or low-cost loans that helped bring electrification in the 1930s. (And indeed, the federal government has been offering loans to the co-ops.)

In a deeper sense, the gumption of these co-ops is super inspirational. The folks in Oklahoma are building networks using self-governing cooperative principles.

That spirit is worth emulating in the rest of the online world. Many folks are annoyed at Big Tech for tolerating abuse, for spying, for sneakily triggering compulsive use. What if, instead of waiting for tech monopolies to reform, we set up more user-run co-ops to operate upstart services we actually want? Imagine co-op social networks that wouldn't need to lure users into endless feed-scrolling "engagement" to keep the ad dollars coming.

"Co-ops are owned by the members, so it's very bottom up," notes Jim Matheson, head of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

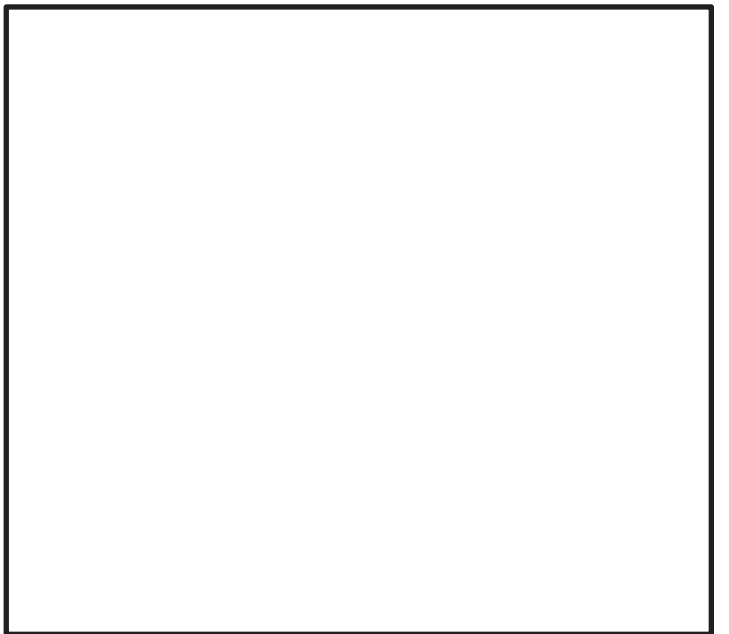
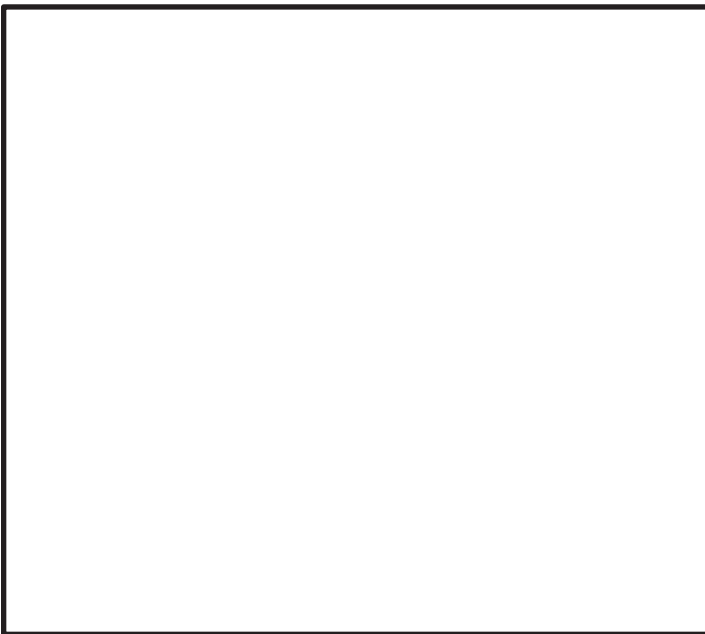
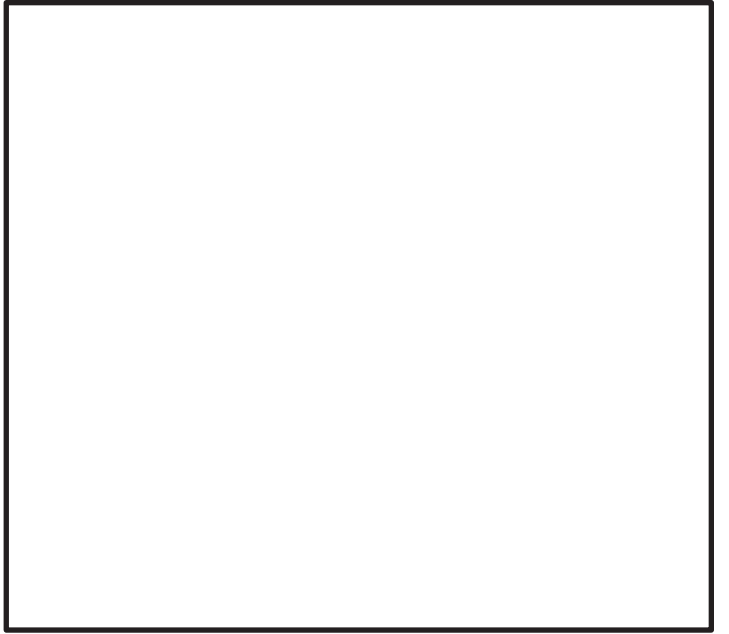
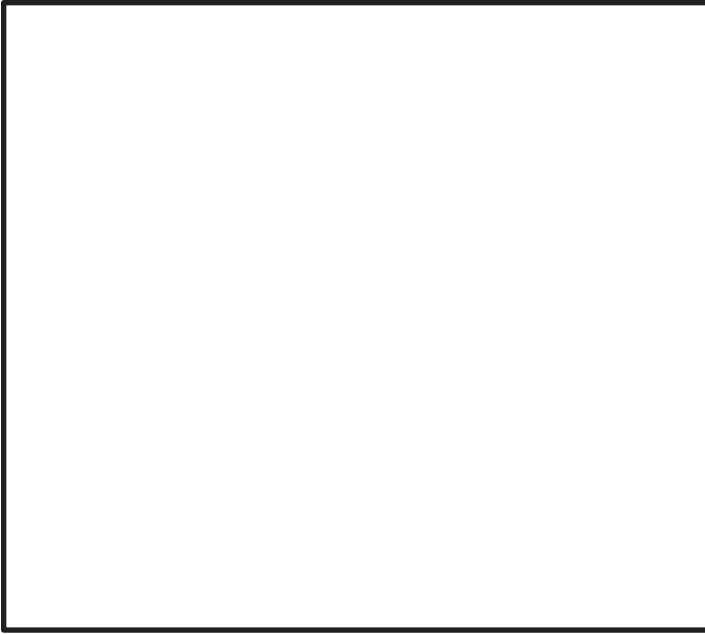
Yeah, I know, this is idealistic. Alternative social platforms haven't exactly thrived. But then again, maybe the goal isn't to be huge but rather, as with the DIY co-ops, to serve tightly focused communities. Even little efforts could effectively spook big social media platforms into reform. When a farmers' co-op plans to roll out broadband, the big companies suddenly decide it's time to upgrade.

The DIY spirit is out there, and it's blasting through the bedrock of Oklahoma.

COOPERATIVES COMIC

Create a comic about:

- The history of cooperatives
 - Cooperative principles
- Cooperative Businesses Today



Show What You Know!

How would forming an agricultural marketing cooperative help family farmers?

Which type of cooperative do you think would be most important in your local community? Why?

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