



WHAT IS A CO-OP?

Cooperatives are member-owned, member-governed businesses that operate for the benefit of their members according to common principles agreed upon by the international cooperative community. In co-ops, members pool resources to bring about economic results that are unobtainable by one person alone. Most simply put, a cooperative is a business:

- voluntarily owned by the people who use it, and
- operated for the benefit of its members¹

HISTORY OF CO-OPS

Cooperatives are not new. They have been part of history for hundreds of years. Cooperatives began to take more formal shape in the late 18th century as people moved from farms to cities. No longer able to grow their own food, they relied on privately owned stores to provide nourishment.¹

As less-powerful members of these new cities, the workers, consumers, farmers and producers banded together to gain economic clout. They improved their options through joint purchases of supplies and services, and kept their costs low.¹

1. GoCoop. [History of Co-ops](#). NCGA. 2008. Web.