



# Do it ourselves

A National Co-operative Development Strategy



Your invitation  
to shape a future  
powered by co-operation

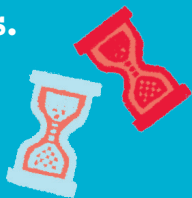
One day most businesses will be run in a participative way, giving a say to those involved.



The best of these will be the foundations for a different kind of economy, one in tune with our values.

These will be co-operatives.

And this is how it starts...

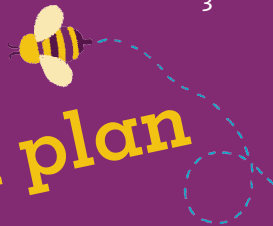


# This is an open plan Open to you

A National Co-operative Development Strategy



By 2018, a strategy has been drawn up, inviting co-operatives and those supportive of co-operative action to be at the heart of a new participatory business action plan.



The plan draws on evidence and dialogue collected over a two-year period. It is reinforced by the experience of other countries where co-operatives make up a tenth of the economy overall, with benefits regarding equality and wellbeing.

The strategy for a new wave of co-operation in the UK is simple in its focus, with three interlocking steps:

## 1. Commit to be great at co-operation

This means living up to your own values, looking for ways to collaborate with others and choosing co-op, whether for your weekly shop or your service supplier.



## 2. Be willing to be open to new co-operation

This means having new conversations and looking for new ways to act co-operatively.

## 3. Join in campaigns for inspiring co-operation

This means having the confidence to spread the word about or campaign for co-operative action that gives you hope.

The strategy itself is based on self help and mutual aid, with an open invitation for co-operatives and people supportive of co-operatives to create their own priorities and commitments in line with what is offered here.

Great, open and inspiring actions follow from constituencies and networks that form around key possibilities.

That can include the millions of people already involved as members or workers in co-operatives.

Early actions and partnerships will include three sectors of the future UK economy around which ambitious new co-operative solutions urgently need to be found. These are set out on the opposite page.

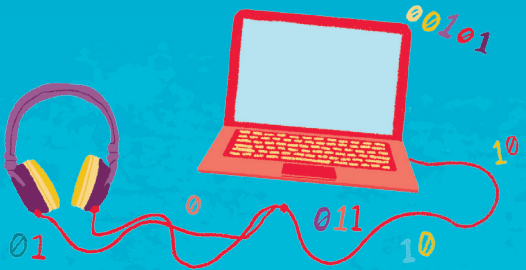
Illustrative targets for the development of the strategy and plan are shown on pages eight and nine. You can see some of the other initiatives that are bubbling up and join in with yours on [www.uk.coop/doit](http://www.uk.coop/doit)



Supporting freelancers to come together in today's 'gig' economy.

Meeting needs for social care through new models of co-operation.

New digital ventures, or 'platform co-operatives', using new technology for shared ownership services.



## 1. Commit to be great at co-operation



If you are part of a co-operative already, it means taking action together to:

- Live up to best practice co-operative governance, drawing on support and assurance where required
- Achieve values of equality and openness when it comes to gender, age and diversity
- Look for ways to encourage your co-operative to trade with other co-ops and likeminded businesses
- Make a commitment to build the skills for co-operation

Working together across co-operatives, such as through Co-operatives UK, it means taking action to:

- Help co-ops by offering a first point of support and information through a UK-wide programme, The Hive



- Create a high quality directory or framework to support co-op-to-co-op trading
- Lead work on innovation and best practice in co-operative governance, including reporting by co-operatives on the value they create

## 2. Be willing to be open to new co-operation

If you are part of a co-operative already, it means taking action together to:

- To be open about data, facts, progress, opportunities and challenges
- Take a look at new ways for members and workers to get involved, such as signing up to SolidFund, a contributory fund to support worker co-operatives
- Explore how to support innovation in one of the three future sectors identified in this strategy, or other areas of pressing need



- Be a partner for new co-operative ideas with federal bodies in key sectors and specialist co-operative development bodies

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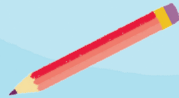
- Work with sector bodies and co-operative development workers to grow areas with the strongest growth potential
- Pilot a Replication Lab to grow successful co-op models
- Share open data on the health and performance of the co-operative sector

### 3. Join in campaigns for inspiring co-operation

If you are part of a co-operative already, it means taking action together to:

- Use the co-op marque to demonstrate that your organisation is a co-operative





- Sign up to a national campaign to inspire the next wave of co-ops
- Use Co-operatives Fortnight as a way to increase understanding of co-ops among staff, members and customers
- Participate in campaigns to improve the policy and regulatory framework for co-operative action

Working together across co-operatives, such as through Co-operatives UK, it means taking action to:

- Provide tools to enable co-operatives tell their story to staff and members
- Equip individual co-operators to be advocates for the co-operative option in public and professional circles
- Lobby government decision makers for a business environment in which participative businesses – such as co-operatives, mutuals and social enterprise – can thrive

**Each of these actions is featured in a set of cards or online on [www.uk.coop/doit](http://www.uk.coop/doit)**



#### ENGAGEMENT

Launch of National Co-operative Development Strategy.

#### ENGAGEMENT

One in four members of Co-operatives UK register some form of action in line with the strategy.

#### ECONOMIC IMPACT

A pilot 'Replication Lab' is under way with evidence of early impact and learning.

#### ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Action plans are in place for work on freelancer co-operatives, social care and platform co-operatives.



#### ENGAGEMENT

Backing from the major professional associations for the co-operative option.

#### ECONOMIC IMPACT

50% increase in public perception of co-operatives as modern and innovative.



#### ENGAGEMENT

Five out of ten people (50% of the UK population) benefit from co-operative or mutual enterprises as a member.

**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

First people sign up to educate business networks and advisers on the co-operative.

**ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

First new initiatives get going that are co-created by co-operatives and partners alongside this strategy.

Collaborative agreements with key partners working alongside the co-operative sector.

Pilot service in place to support co-op-to-co-op trading.

Guidance in place for narrative reporting by co-operatives on their impact.

**ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

Triple the rate of co-operative start-ups and conversions.

Evidence in place of positive social and environmental impact (such as the engagement and dignity of people working as freelancers or people as social care users).

**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

One pound in ten (10% of the UK economy GDP) is generated by participative businesses such as co-operative and mutual enterprise.



## A time for co-operation

# The story behind the strategy



In the years running up to 2020, despite calls to keep calm and carry on, Britain is experiencing more uncertainty – in terms of risk and opportunity – than it has for decades.

Coupled with the unknowns of a Britain outside of the EU, it is a tough economy in which jobs are more insecure and incomes more unequal. There is a longing for more of a say in what goes on.

At the same time, a new wave of co-owned ventures are emerging – local pubs are being bought and run by communities, tech start-ups are being created by their workers, and young people priced out of the housing market are buying properties together.

These participative enterprises are standing alongside 7,000 other co-operatives and wider mutual ventures and social enterprises and over a million and a half co-ops worldwide.

These reflect a model of self-help and mutual aid that dates back centuries. Now, again, is a time for co-operation.

These are the foundations of a different kind of economy, an economy that is creating a fairer, more equal Britain and allowing people to have a more genuine control over the things that matter.

## The challenges and opportunities

People participate in different ways in economic life; as workers, customers, farmers, coders, entrepreneurs, suppliers, cleaners, patients, teachers, students, residents... citizens.



The best co-operatives have learned about how these rich and diverse types of participation can be turned into business advantages.

The key weakness is that for most entrepreneurs, professional advisers and policy-makers, the only form of business they know is one that is led by individuals and owned by investors. As a result, the odds are often stacked against initiatives based on partnership.

There is a potential advantage though. Such businesses, coming from an ethos of self-help and mutual aid, are willing to band together, ready to change the odds. They believe in the power and potential of people acting together.

**To do it ourselves**

# We want to create a different kind of economy – one powered by co-operation

A National Co-operative Development Strategy has been developed with input and ideas from over 550 co-operatives.

This booklet introduces ways in which you can get involved in shaping what happens now, using the three steps of co-operation set out here.

There is a set of 35 cards available to accompany this booklet and to download. They are a creative tool to discover inspiring examples and ideas for what you and your organisation can do to create a more participative economy.

A technical report for this strategy and related resources can be found on [\*\*www.uk.coop/doit\*\*](http://www.uk.coop/doit)

Developed by Co-operatives UK. Designed by  
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