

## Socially Disadvantaged Group Grant Program

### Success Story: Start.Coop Launches Market-Ready Start-Ups by Scaling Out

**\$56,155**

Socially Disadvantaged Group Grant from USDA

**5**

Co-op Entrepreneurs Supported through SDGG

**65%**

Start.Coop Co-ops with Female/Non-binary Owner

**62%**

Start.Coop Co-ops with BIPOC Owner

**45**

Co-ops Accelerated by Start.Coop, 2019–2023

**24**

Co-ops Incubated by Start.Coop, Jan 22–Oct 23

#### Promoting the Power of COOPERATIVE-OWNED BUSINESSES

Cooperatives for a Better World, a Manchester, NH, nonprofit known as Start.Coop, knows that there is no easy path to entrepreneurship. Its innovators—using extensive backgrounds in education, housing, agriculture, finance, social justice and other essential sectors that thrive under diverse participatory coordination—are always looking for more and better ways to serve its members. Through training and technical assistance (TAT), Start.Coop facilitates a development process to help co-ops scale their business. But helping one co-op at a time is not entirely efficient, so the TAT provider saw a need for incubating and accelerating its proven development process within a group.

#### Focusing Efforts Where RESILIENCE IS NEEDED MOST

Start.coop's philosophy of cooperative development focuses on helping entrepreneurs create and adhere to solid business and ownership models. If co-op owners could refine their strategies using insights from other colleagues, learning and impact would be multiplied. This free flow of ideas—particularly among disadvantaged and discounted business owners—streamlines operations, helps secure equal marketplace exchange, and addresses economic and societal challenges faced throughout the journey. Recruiting a cohort and establishing an incubator program, however, requires capital, and securing funds through philanthropic sources is a daunting challenge.

#### Finding Help to Sustain a REWARDING & PROMISING FUTURE

To expand its reach and incubate a new group of startups, Start.coop turned to the USDA Rural Development's Socially Disadvantaged Group Grant to cover the expenses of developing at least five cooperative businesses. Financial support secured, Start.coop could select and recruit a cohort, providing tailored business support through an incubator program designed for group needs. The participating cooperatives, in turn, expand business ownership and wealth for other entrepreneurs in their area through new jobs, new product markets, and more ideas. By learning from each other, members of the Start.Coop community can breathe new life into the communities they call home.

**For program regulations and requirements, please go to the [USDA RD fact sheet](#)**

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