Our Mission
We work for economic, social, and racial justice by advancing community-based, cooperative, and democratically owned or managed enterprises with a preference for assisting cooperatives in low-income communities by:
• providing financial products at reasonable rates
• developing business skills
• offering an investment opportunity that promotes socially conscious enterprise

Our Vision
Economic justice for all through thriving cooperative enterprises

What Is a Cooperative?
A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

Values
Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity.

Principles
Cooperatives embrace the principles of voluntary open ownership, democratic owner control, owner economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, cooperation among cooperatives, and concern for community.

Visit us online at www.coopfund.coop to find links to our borrowers, access our loan application, download our prospectus, and to learn more about cooperatives.

C O O P E R A T I V E    F U N D
O F T H E    N O R T H E A S T

CFNE News
Fall 2022

Loans Approved and Funded
CFNE has had an exciting year. Through August, we deployed $77MM in loan funds! With four months to go, we are on track to break our organizational lending record.

Organizing for the Assabet Co-op Market began in 2012. They now have over 2,000 member-owners. This July they broke ground on a leased space in Maynard, MA and have begun renovations.

Assabet Co-op Market has a larger trade area than is typical for a food co-op, serving a rural/suburban area outside of Boston. They held a successful capital campaign -- and recently launched a supplemental capital campaign to accommodate increasing construction costs and costs related to equipment delays.

Maine Camp Outfitters preserved nine jobs and kept an important company in Deer Isle, ME, through a cooperative conversion.

The business has operated for more than thirty years, providing wholesale branded merchandise for summer camps and small businesses throughout Maine, as well as operating a retail gift shop.

The cooperative received support from the Co-op Development Institute (CDI) throughout the conversion process.

Fork Food Lab is a “member-centric nonprofit,” a food business incubator and shared commercial kitchen in Portland, ME. It has over sixty members, ranging from food producers and processors, to food trucks, bakeries and caterers, to food-related educational providers. Member businesses are 60% women-owned and 20% BIPOC, with places of origin in Southeast Asia, Africa, South America and Eastern Europe. Currently Fork is designing a renovated 42,000 square foot facility in South Portland with plans to move in early 2023.

Austin Design is a full-service architecture firm in Brattleboro, VT, serving southern VT, western MA, and southwestern NH. They have been in business for 30 years under the leadership of founder Bill Austin. Bill retired this year by selling the company to his employees. The current staff includes two architects, seven designers/draftspeople, and General Manager Chamois Holschuh.

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Dear cooperators,

As you can see on page 1, our lending team has been busy. We have also strengthened our development services, our financial tool kit, and our staff. And we’re not stopping there!

With our primary strategic goal as our north star (giving BIPOC communities equitable opportunity to form, fund, and operate cooperatives), we approved two innovative new initiatives to advance our racial equity goals.

→ Recognizing that equitable co-op development means BIPOC communities need more co-op development resources, we launched the Co-op Navigator Fellowship. This fellowship builds the capacity of six BIPOC-rooted and -led economic development organizations to promote and develop co-ops in their communities (for more info, read the Learning Team update on page 3).

→ We are piloting a financial product to support high impact start-up co-ops with the potential to move industries toward justice, allocating $1 million of our net assets to up to ten “equity-like” investments, with repayment terms tied to the co-op’s success, not to a predetermined schedule. We approved our first investment, which we will publicize once all of the documents are signed.

Taking on these new initiatives requires more staff capacity. See elsewhere on this page for two recent, exciting hires.

As our organization has grown, our board role has changed, from being very hands-on a few years ago to an oversight and strategy-setting role. This has allowed our board to focus on the big questions and our big ambitious answers, and to support making board service accessible for more of our stakeholders.

All of these developments required close collaboration between our staff and our board, informed by the experiences of our region’s many co-op communities. We are deeply appreciative of everyone’s collaboration and support, and look forward to finishing this year on a strong note!

In cooperation,
Bonnie Hudspeth, President
Kimberly R. Lyle, Vice-president
Micha Josephy, Executive Director
Business Support and Partnership Development

In June, CFNE’s board approved an investment of over $800,000 for our new Co-op Navigator Fellowship. In this three-year program, CFNE is partnering with community-based economic development organizations across the northeast to hire, train, and mentor entrepreneurs and organizers who will serve as Co-op Navigators. These fellows will study successful co-op models, help their communities identify co-op opportunities, and embed these learnings into host organizations’ work.

We’d like to extend our gratitude to the borrowers, donors, and investors who are our partners in this initiative to change the face of the co-op movement, and the host organizations who have walked with us to create this pilot: Boston Ujima Project (Boston, MA); Capital Region Co-op Cnxn (Troy, NY); Four Directions Development Corporation (Orono, ME); Fuerza Laboral/Power of Workers (Central Falls, RI); Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (northeast regional); and ReSET (Hartford, CT).

This project launched in October 2022, after consultation with Black, Latinx, and Indigenous-rooted organizations developing community-owned and -governed enterprises. Our nation’s legacy of racism and colonialism has meant that emerging communities have had limited access to culturally relevant co-op development support and investment. The Fellowship will increase access to culturally and linguistically appropriate TA for diverse entrepreneurs seeking to build wealth and self-determination through co-ops. In the longer term, it will provide a runway for community partners to coordinate a regional strategy for future funding and development.

WE BEEN UP TO?

Ground Fair in Unity, ME, in September.

In early September CFNE’s New York Loan Officer, Joe Marraffino, organized a day-long workshop track on Money and the Movements at the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives conference in Philadelphia. Sessions explored the financing of movement-aligned cooperative projects. A morning panel focused on capital supply from CDFIs, loan funds, direct public offerings, and employee-owned trusts, and included frequent CFNE collaborators LEAF and CEI. An afternoon panel heard from capital recipients, including CFNE borrowers White Electric Coffee, Kalche Wine Co, and The Drivers Cooperative, as well as Clark Arrington, a CFNE board member. In between panels there were conversations among government actors and grassroots groups, including former NY City Mayor de Blasio’s office, the NY City Network of Worker Cooperatives, the Mass. Center for Employee Ownership, and the Mass. Solidarity Economy Network.

Ending the day, small groups discussed short videos describing “movement money” in other places and times: historic African American cooperatives, union-led buyouts in the 1980s and 1990s, Italy’s Marcora Law, and Quebec’s Solidarity Cooperatives.

As this newsletter goes to press, Micha Josephy is presenting on a panel at the Opportunity Finance Network conference in NY City on Expanding Financing for Employee Ownership Strategies.
All are members of the newly-formed co-op.

Austin Design worked with the Vermont Employee Ownership Center and CFNE throughout the transition to worker ownership.

The co-op is particularly active in designing breweries across New England and affordable multifamily housing projects in Massachusetts. Much of their work comes through referrals from previous clients.

**Heartleaf Cooperative Bookstore** started as a pop-up in July 2021, appearing at local markets, flea markets, and arts & crafts fairs, and recently opened a storefront in Providence, RI, as a worker- and consumer-owned cooperative. The co-op emphasizes challenging white supremacy and recognizing and serving the LGBTQ community. The bookstore serves as a place where people can come together to gather, and to be “inspired and challenged by the written word.”

**Kindred Creative Residence and Agro Forest** (Kindred CRAFT) is an inclusive BIPOC-founded and -led collective dedicated to art, land stewardship, and education. Kindred operates a nature-centered educational residency/campsite in Vermont. Programs focus on regenerative agriculture, art, education, social justice, and community healing in nature. The co-op runs summer camps and workshops, as well as creative residencies and off-season rentals.

**Happy Little Paradise** is a childcare cooperative in Lewiston, ME, a community with a strong Angolan-American community. It is a women- and BIPOC-led cooperative, meeting the underserved need for quality childcare. The worker-owners offer culturally and linguistically appropriate, affordable childcare to infants and pre-school-aged children.

To be added to our mailing list, invest in, or borrow from CFNE, please email us at cfne@coopfund.coop. Visit us at coopfund.coop, and check us out on Facebook.