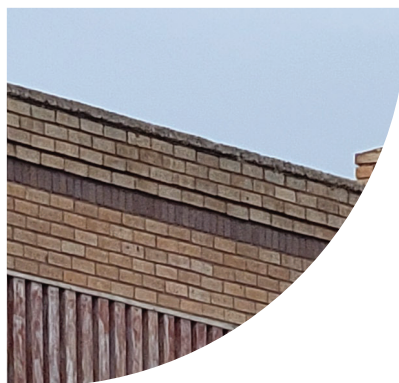
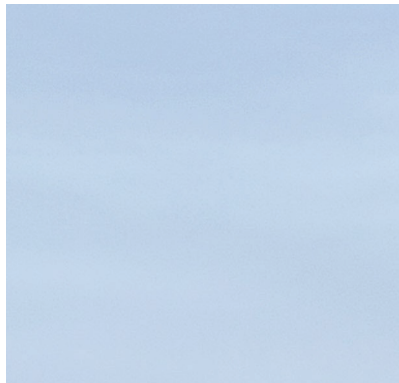


# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024



## MCDCs work is supported in part by:



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Flathead Electric Cooperative  
Montana's Credit Unions  
Nemont Telephone Cooperative  
Triangle Communications  
3 Rivers Communications  
Big Flat Electric Cooperative  
Glacier Electric Cooperative  
Blackfoot Communications  
Clearwater Credit Union  
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Leanne Hall  
Raymond Porter  
Juanetta Keeler

# Letter From the Executive Director

During our year-end wrap-up, one of my favorite things to do is reflect on all the accomplishments of this small but mighty team. This year brought significant growth and impact for the Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) and the Montana Council of Cooperatives (MCOC). We worked to strengthen cooperative development and support Montana communities with sustainable, local solutions. I could not be prouder of my team, and their dedication to the Cooperative Community remains my inspiration.

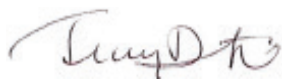
This year, we expanded our technical assistance and educational resources. Updated toolkits, comprehensive studies, and refined processes have empowered communities to explore innovative cooperative models in addressing challenges in food distribution, housing, retail, and more.

Highlights from 2024 include:

- The incorporation of four new cooperatives and four more nearing incorporation in 2025.
- New toolkits to assist with community revitalization, succession planning, and local ownership through cooperatives.
- Feasibility studies and partnerships to create a federation of food-based cooperatives.
- Completion of the Montana Cooperative Housing study.
- Design of Montana's first and only cooperative academy, set to launch on May 12-14, 2025.

Our team's commitment to professional growth has been integral to this success. By pursuing targeted training, we've enhanced our ability to support Montana's cooperatives with cutting-edge knowledge and resources, advancing economic development and lasting community impact.

We're excited to build on this momentum. With the continued support of Montana's cooperative community, we aim to strengthen local economies, promote sustainability, and ensure access to essential goods and services for all Montanans. Thank you to our funders, partners, members, and communities for your support. Here's to another year of cooperative success and innovation!



Tracy McIntyre  
Executive Director

**MONTANA**  
**Cooperative**  
**DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

# Montana Cooperative Development Center

*To Empower Economic Development by Utilizing the Cooperative Business Model, for the Betterment of Montana Communities*



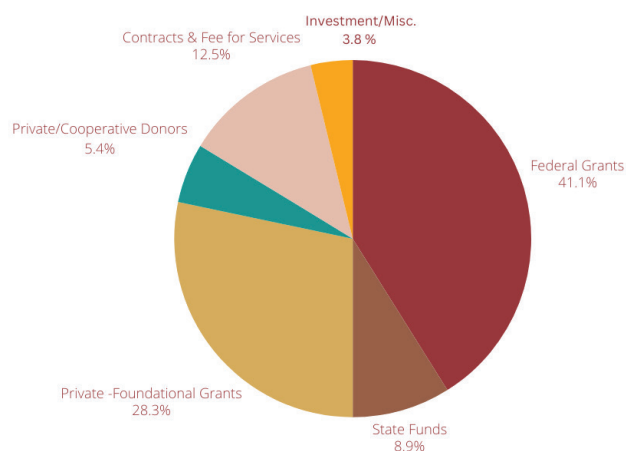
At the Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC), we are committed to strengthening Montana's communities through the transformative power of the cooperative business model. By delivering high-quality cooperative development programs, we help entrepreneurs, businesses, and organizations turn collaborative ideas into thriving enterprises.

Our work harnesses Montana's unique cooperative legal framework to foster innovation and growth across diverse industries. From aspiring entrepreneurs to established businesses, MCDC provides the tools and guidance needed to create sustainable, community-focused solutions.

What sets MCDC apart is our dedication to building connections and inspiring collaboration. We partner with local leaders, organizations,

and communities to develop innovative projects that address critical needs, from housing to retail to financial services to agriculture. By championing the cooperative model, we empower Montanans to take ownership of their futures, creating opportunities that are equitable, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the values of cooperation. Together, we're building a stronger Montana—one cooperative at a time.

MCDC's work is made possible through diverse funding sources, including grants from federal agencies, state partnerships, and private contributions. These resources allow us to provide technical assistance, educational programming, and innovative projects that strengthen Montana's cooperatives and rural communities. We are deeply grateful for the support that drives our mission forward. If you would like to donate or sponsor MCDC, please visit [www.mcdc.coop/support-us](http://www.mcdc.coop/support-us)



**Fiscal Year 2023-2024  
Revenue**



# Meet Our Staff



TRACY MCINTYRE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
GREAT FALLS



JUANETTA KEELER  
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS  
GREAT FALLS



DAVEY MADISON  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
HELENA



NICOLE BORNER  
CO-OP SPECIALIST  
ROUNDUP



CHEYENNE ROBINSON  
CO-OP SPECIALIST  
LAME DEER



LYNDSAY GUITERREZ  
CO-OP SPECIALIST  
GREAT FALLS

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MONTANA FARMERS UNION  
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DONYA PARRISH  
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HELENA

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CHS  
CUT BANK

RHONDA SCHWENKE  
ZERO TO FIVE  
HELENA

KRIS DESCHEEMAER  
MT FARM BUREAU  
LEWISTOWN

LEANNE HALL  
MECA  
GREAT FALLS

## Year in Review

# ADVANCING COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN MONTANA

The Montana Cooperative Development Center (MCDC) continues to deliver impactful services that empower communities and drive economic growth across Montana. In 2024, MCDC made significant strides in expanding its resources, services, and partnerships by focusing on resiliency, sustainability, and innovation through cooperatives.

## Launching New Resources

A big highlight of this year was the development and launch of two new toolkits: the Cooperative Conversion Toolkit and the Opportunity Cooperative Toolkit. These resources are tailored to address the unique needs of communities and businesses through the cooperative business model.

The *Cooperative Conversion Toolkit* is a comprehensive guide designed for businesses exploring a transition to cooperative ownership. With step-by-step guidance, case studies, and practical tools, this resource will be instrumental for businesses seeking to preserve local ownership, retain jobs, and ensure long-term sustainability.

The *Opportunity Cooperative Toolkit* provides communities with a framework to create locally controlled investment cooperatives. These cooperatives enable members to pool resources, invest in critical needs, and drive economic growth. From legal structures to operational best practices, this toolkit lays the foundation for successful cooperatives in communities of all sizes.

## Delivering Impact

MCDC expanded our services in 2024 to include grant writing, providing critical support for cooperatives seeking funding to grow and thrive. This new offering proved highly successful, with MCDC helping secure *\$122,500 in grant funding* for cooperative projects across Montana.

The funding supported three cooperative projects focused on agricultural production and distribution, strengthening local food systems and creating new market opportunities. It also provided resources for feasibility studies and site selection for value-added processing, food storage, and distribution infrastructure. Additionally, the funding was used for capacity-building efforts, helping cooperatives enhance their marketing strategies and invest in essential equipment.



## Strengthening Cooperative Connections



In 2024, MCDC expanded our presence on the national stage, strengthening our reputation as a leader in cooperative development. This year, Tracy was elected to the NCBA-CLUSA board, a role that underscores MCDC's influence in advancing cooperative solutions nationwide. Additionally, Davey continued to serve on the board of CooperationWorks, further solidifying MCDC's commitment to fostering collaboration in and out of the state.

MCDC's expertise was also showcased at several high-profile national conferences and events reflecting MCDC's growing impact in the cooperative community in Montana and across the nation.

MCDC staff presented at:

- [\*Intertribal Agricultural Council\*](#) Annual Conference in Las Vegas, where we shared insights on cooperative development in Indigenous communities.
- [\*Rural Grocery Summit\*](#) in Montgomery, Alabama, addressing how cooperatives can strengthen rural food systems.
- [\*Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities\*](#) Conference in Sidney, Nebraska, to discuss leveraging cooperatives for community-driven economic development.
- [\*Interagency Cooperative Working Group\*](#) through the USDA, a collaborative effort to advance cooperative initiatives nationwide.
- Cooperative Development Training Program for [\*CooperationWorks\*](#), providing expertise to professionals in cooperative development.
- [\*NCBA- CLUSA's Impact Week and Conference\*](#) on the Montana Cooperative Ecosystem and how MCDC and MCOC are building a more robust cooperative economy by engaging all cooperative sectors.

## Engaging with Tribal Communities

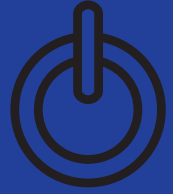
MCDC remains committed to supporting Native communities across Montana through meaningful engagement and cooperative solutions. In 2024, MCDC partnered with National Center for Appropriate Technology to co-host [\*listening sessions on five reservations\*](#), focusing on cooperatives, agriculture, and food access. These sessions built trust and identified ways MCDC can support Tribal communities.

This year, MCDC also strengthened its ability to serve Native communities by welcoming Cheyenne as a permanent part-time staff member. After interning with MCDC in 2023, Cheyenne brought invaluable connections and insights to the organization, enhancing its work with Indigenous communities.



4

New Cooperatives  
Formed



31

Cooperatives  
Assisted

22

Cooperatives  
under  
development

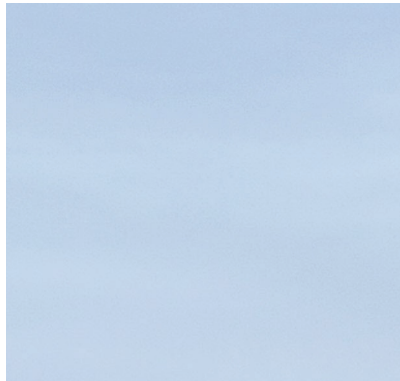
36

Prospective  
Cooperatives



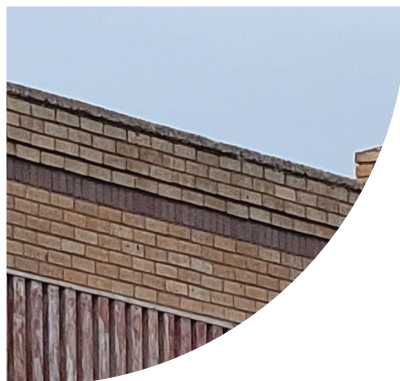
122,500

137,750



57

Business  
Assisted



50+

Communities  
Visited





**25**

Cooperative  
Education Activities

**58**

Presentations



**20**

Conferences Attended

**6,323**

Attendees



# MCDC IMPACT

at a glance

**2024**

in Grant Funds Secured for Cooperative Projects



in Private Dollars Leveraged for Cooperative Projects

**103**

Agricultural  
Producer and  
Businesses  
Supported



**7**



Publications

**14**

National and State  
Board or Committee  
Positions

# Expanding the Cooperative Community

For Montana communities, cooperatives offer a powerful solution to unique challenges, such as limited access to services and a lack of local capital. By pooling resources and sharing responsibility, cooperatives empower communities to take control of their futures.

MCDC's role in cooperative development begins long before a cooperative is officially formed. We work with communities to identify challenges, explore solutions, and educate them on the benefits of the cooperative business model. From initial idea to incorporation, MCDC provides hands-on technical assistance, including governance expertise, limited legal assistance, financial guidance, and member education to ensure the project's success.

Our process is deeply rooted in community engagement. By involving local stakeholders at every step, MCDC ensures that cooperatives are designed to reflect the unique values and priorities of the people they serve. This approach is essential for the long-term viability and resiliency of each cooperative.

At MCDC, our work doesn't stop once a cooperative is incorporated. We are committed to supporting cooperatives throughout their journey, ensuring their success and sustainability. We

## *Spotlight on 2024's New Cooperatives*

### **Montana Food Hub Great Falls**

The Montana Food Hub Cooperative is set to transform Montana's local food landscape by acting as a central distribution point for locally grown food.

Through an online platform, the cooperative will link Montana growers with restaurants, food businesses, institutions, and consumers, addressing the challenges producers face in reaching broader markets. As it develops, the Food Hub plans to expand into value-added production and food business incubation, becoming a key resource for knowledge and support in the local food industry.

### **Musselshell Valley Development Cooperative Harlowton**

This cooperative is addressing the pressing need for affordable housing and revitalized commercial spaces. Formed as a real estate investment cooperative, it plans to purchase, renovate, and sell project properties back to the community, with a focus on vacant and deteriorated buildings. The cooperative is rooted in community-driven investment, fostering pride, ownership, and action to enhance the town's vitality while attracting entrepreneurs, businesses, and residents.



offer training, resources, and ongoing support to help these cooperatives grow and thrive. This long-term commitment fosters resilience and ensures that these cooperatives can continue serving their communities far into the future.

Each year, MCDC works to improve our development process and create new and more tools for our emerging and existing cooperatives. We are constantly expanding our knowledge to improve and streamline the development process and help more communities address their needs each year.

In 2024, we proudly supported the incorporation of four new cooperatives: the Montana Food Hub Cooperative in Great Falls, the Musselshell Valley Development Cooperative in Harlowton, the Opportunity Development Co-op of Petroleum County, AKA Winnet Co-op in Winnett, and the Prairie Perks Cooperative in Hinsdale. Each of these cooperatives represents a unique response to their specific needs and exemplifies how cooperatives can stabilize and revitalize Montana communities.

ment Cooperative in Harlowton, the Opportunity Development Co-op of Petroleum County, AKA Winnet Co-op in Winnett, and the Prairie Perks Cooperative in Hinsdale. Each of these cooperatives represents a unique response to their specific needs and exemplifies how cooperatives can stabilize and revitalize Montana communities.

## **Opportunity Development Co-op of Petroleum County, AKA Winnet Co-op Winnett**

In one of Montana's most rural areas, this cooperative is tackling local economic challenges by fostering opportunities for community-driven development. By pooling resources, members are supporting businesses, addressing housing and real estate issues, and promoting sustainable growth to ensure the community remains vibrant and resilient for future generations.

## **Prairie Perks Cooperative Hinsdale**

Formed to revive the town's cherished coffee shop, Sweet Memories, this cooperative has brought new life to an important community gathering spot. Reopening as Prairie Perks in October, the cooperative now serves coffee, locally made baked goods, and delicious breakfast options, creating a welcoming space for residents to come together. The cooperative not only preserves a local business but also fosters a sense of community and connection. Prairie Perks demonstrates how cooperatives can address local needs while enhancing community life.

## Looking Ahead

# BUILDING MONTANA'S COOPERATIVE FUTURE

In 2025, we are excited to continue to build on our success and identify opportunities to educate more communities on the cooperative business model and build new cooperatives. We are focusing on launching new educational programs, improving technical assistance, and responding to the ever-changing needs of Montana communities.

## Cooperative Housing Solutions

Building on the findings of [MCDC's Cooperative Housing Study](#), innovative cooperative housing pilot programs will be implemented in multiple communities. In partnership with local stakeholders, MCDC will develop models designed to address rural housing challenges and showcase the potential of integrating cooperative housing with long-term care solutions, enabling community members to age in place while freeing up housing stock.

To further support these efforts, MCDC is developing a [cooperative housing toolkit](#) to help communities create sustainable, customized housing solutions. Interest in cooperative housing and real estate investment cooperatives has surged, and we anticipate several communities exploring cooperative solutions for their housing challenges.

## Investing in Montana Businesses

In 2025, MCDC will launch the [Montana Women's Finance Cooperative](#), an innovative investment cooperative aimed at empowering women across Montana with new opportunities for community-driven investment and financial growth. This cooperative model enables members to pool their resources to invest in local projects and businesses, fostering economic development at the community level.

MCDC began developing this concept over two years ago as part of its investment cooperative initiatives, recognizing both the demand for locally controlled investment options and the gap in investment participation among women. The Montana Women's Finance Cooperative provides a unique opportunity for Montanans to invest directly in their communities through a democratically owned and operated business.



## Expanding Cooperative Education

To support the growth of new and existing cooperatives, MCDC will roll out an [Educational Webinar Series](#) covering topics such as governance, financial planning, and community engagement. We are also creating quarterly webinars for general cooperative education that will highlight our programs and the benefits of cooperatives.



## Cooperative Academy Kickoff

The *Montana Cooperative Academy* is nearing its official launch, on May 12th through 14th, 2025. Developed with support from key partners in the cooperative community and MSU-Great Falls and support for the CHS Foundation and USDA Rural Development, the Academy is an intensive program that empowers cooperative employees, members, and board members to enhance their cooperative knowledge and build cross-sector connections.



The year-long effort to create a structured curriculum integrates industry standards and best practices, aiming to build an educated and skilled cooperative workforce. The Academy's long-term success will rely on continuous improvement, stronger partnerships, targeted outreach, and a dynamic, relevant curriculum to adapt to evolving needs.

## Improving Resources

MCDC continues to enhance our capacity to support cooperative development by focusing on expanding resources and strengthening technical expertise. We will take on multiple pre-feasibility assessments to explore the potential for cooperative federations, cooperative franchising models, and interstate cooperatives. These assessments will provide a foundation for innovative cooperative structures that can address unique community needs and create sustainable economic opportunities.

Additionally, MCDC will prioritize increasing staff education to ensure our team is equipped with the latest knowledge and best practices in cooperative development. By enhancing technical assistance capabilities, MCDC will be better positioned to provide effective support to emerging and established cooperatives across the state. With a strong vision for the year ahead, MCDC is committed to advancing economic development in Montana.

## 2025 Cooperative Trends

**Worker-owned Cooperatives** becoming a popular model for creating sustainable and employee-focused workplaces.

**Investment cooperatives** addressing rural challenges by pooling resources and creating local opportunities.

Agricultural cooperatives working together to improve **distribution networks** and strengthen the regional food system.

**Housing cooperatives** emerging as a solution to workforce housing shortages in Montana communities.

Cooperatives explored as a strategy for **succession planning** to preserve businesses and local ownership

# Montana Council of Cooperatives

*Working to Unite, Promote, and Strengthen Cooperative Businesses Across Montana.*



2024 was a banner year for the Montana Council of Cooperatives (MCOC) as it advanced its mission to support and grow the cooperative movement across the state. Through strategic initiatives, innovative programming, and strong partnerships, MCOC continues to serve as a vital resource for Montana's cooperative ecosystem. This year's highlights reflect MCOC's commitment to collaboratively building a strong cooperative ecosystem and providing foundational synergy for the upcoming year.

## *A New Era for MCOC Members*

A significant milestone was accomplished this year. MCOC is a 70-year-old organization that has made limited changes over the years. The board and staff worked tirelessly to develop and introduce a refreshed membership benefit packet based on the feedback received from members. The membership is rooted in the 2023 Strategic Development Guide. This comprehensive resource emphasizes the value of membership, offering clear benefits and showcasing MCOC's unique role in strengthening Montana's cooperative network. Take a moment and visit the updated website [www.montanacouncil.coop](http://www.montanacouncil.coop) to explore your cooperative's membership benefits or to become a member!

## *Growing the Montana Cooperative Ecosystem*

In 2024, MCOC deepened its impact through initiatives designed to expand Montana's cooperative ecosystem. This effort is to create a system with open communication among sectors, build networks and opportunities for cross-collaboration, and increase the general public's knowledge of Montana cooperatives and the ecosystem's impacts on the State.



# 2024 Board



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## 2024 Initiatives

### Quarterly Roundtables

MCOC initiated cross-sector quarterly roundtables with the other four cooperative associations serving the State: Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, Broad-band MT, and Montana's Credit Unions. These cross-sector discussions have fostered peer-to-peer learning, collaboration, and networking. Topics ranged from cooperative education, policy and outreach, and overall cooperative health in the State.

### Endowment Growth

This year saw substantial progress toward building the Montana Cooperative Legacy Fund, an endowment benefiting the state's four cooperative trade associations and the Montana Cooperative Development Center. Through this endowment, MCOC is ushering in a new venue for sustainable capacity for those serving cooperatives.

## Looking Ahead

With 2024's successes as a foundation, MCOC is poised to continue its transformative work in 2025 and beyond. By building stronger connections, advocating for cooperative-friendly policies, and investing in the next generation of cooperative leaders, MCOC remains a driving force for sustainable community development.



MONTANA COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT CENTER