

Community Planning and Economic Development News Release

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City of Minneapolis Launches New Cooperative Technical Assistance Program

Thursday, April 21, 2016 – (Minneapolis, MN) – On Wednesday, April 20, the City of Minneapolis announced the expansion of its Business Technical Assistance Program (B-TAP) to include services aimed at supporting the development of new Minneapolis co-operatives through the new Co-operative Technical Assistance Program (C-TAP). The announcement took place during a “State of Co-ops in Minneapolis” event hosted by City staff at Open Book. Over 50 established co-op members, co-op technical assistance organizations, and groups interested in developing co-ops were in attendance. Guest presenters included Council Member Kevin Reich, Council Member Alondra Cano, Fair State Brewery Co-op, and Cooperative Development Services. Council Members Elizabeth Glidden and Cameron Gordon and representation from Council Member Quincy’s office were also in attendance to show support.

"Our city's vibrancy has been made possible by the entrepreneurial nature of its people," said Mayor Betsy Hodges. "It is imperative that we at the City, innovate and adapt our policies and programs to keep our economy growing. Co-ops are a trademark of our economy and C-TAP is an attempt to support further creation of an already successful business model."

"This new program acknowledges the significant role cooperatives play in the economy of our city and the fact that the cooperative business model – that people can work together, sharing resources and governance, to strengthen communities – offers significant benefit for all of us in terms of increased economic empowerment, social vitality and community development," said Minneapolis Council Member Kevin Reich.

Minneapolis has historically been a co-op friendly city, creating more cooperative legal and accounting infrastructure, and a higher level of overall public familiarity, than is found in most other cities. Over the past two years, the City’s department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) has undertaken an internal review of programmatic support for cooperative development. As a result, CPED found that in addition existing business tools, there was a need to provide technical assistance that responds to the specific challenges of forming and managing a co-op in the marketplace.

"We evaluated our current business tools and realized an expansion of our Business Technical Assistance Program was needed to address the uniqueness of the co-op model," said D. Craig Taylor, Director of the City of Minneapolis department of Community Planning and Economic Development. "Our goal for C-TAP is to increase opportunities for equity, creativity and collaboration for entrepreneurs in Minneapolis."

C-TAP will offer assistance to groups interested in forming new co-ops in Minneapolis including feasibility classes, technical assistance to redefine feasibility, board member and organizational design, and technical assistance for co-op retention and expansion. The program will fully roll out over the next three years.

The first co-op feasibility class starts on May 11 for groups interested in starting a co-op. The class will equip participants with the tools to evaluate their co-op idea and/or refine their model for those that are already in the process of incorporation. The class is a series of eight sessions each lasting two hours. Groups must commit to all eight sessions, have selected a product or service prior to signing up for the class, and be interested in locating in Minneapolis.

"To develop this program we identified the gaps that needed to be addressed, explored national and international best practices, and created an innovative program that will promote the development of more co-ops in Minneapolis," said Daniel Bonilla, City of Minneapolis Senior Project Coordinator. The program was developed with assistance of local co-op developer experts.

"As a cooperatively owned business in a neighborhood with several other thriving co-ops, we are very excited to see the City doing more to support new co-ops," said Matthew Hauck, Director of Operations for Fair State Brewing Cooperative. "Minneapolis is already a great place to start a cooperatively owned business, but there are always challenges. This program will be invaluable in helping cooperatively minded entrepreneurs address the technical and legal aspects of starting a new co-op."

The goals of the C-TAP program include leveraging the co-op model for maximum community benefit to 1) use the co-op model as an economic development tool to reduce poverty and promote social cohesion, 2) increase racial and ethnic diversity, and 3) promote innovation, community building, and local investment by promoting a more collaborative business model. To learn more about the department of Community Planning and Economic Development's B-TAP or C-TAP program or view the research study and presentation from last night's meeting please visit the City's website.

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