

Local Organic Food Co-ops Network 2015-2016 PROGRESS REPORT



LOFC Network
Progress Report 2015-2016
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Mission

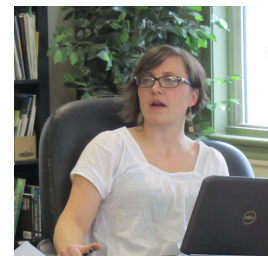
Building cooperative, just, sustainable, local food systems in Ontario

Who We Are

Food and farm co-ops are building a new kind of food system in Ontario, and around the world. From Fort Albany to Fort Erie, and from Windsor to Hawkesbury, new local food and farm co-ops are sprouting up, with an interest in providing good food for local communities and transforming the food system for our collective well-being. Since its inception in 2009, the Local Organic Food Co-ops Network has grown from a handful of co-operatives to 90 co-ops and growing!



In 2015- 2016, the Network members, Steering Committee and partners engaged in consultation and planning for a new 3-year Strategic Plan. The work built the foundation for the successful fundraising campaigns in 2015-2016, and helped to shape the future direction and strategies of the network. In 2016, we hired our new Executive Director, Peggy Baillie.



Building the co-operative food system

Our membership varies in size, scope, governance and purpose, from online distribution co-operatives to grocer retail, from job training social enterprises to producer co-operatives.

All our members share the values of supporting local communities with access to healthy food, equitable wages and supporting local farmers and food producers.



A new partnership with the Ecological Farmers of Ontario has meant new opportunities for the LOFC Network to address and support co-op initiatives in the producer community. The work is supported by a multi-year grant from Libro Credit Union.



Ecological Farmers
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO



Our members have a big impact across the province

Our members are having a big impact across the province. Food and farm co-ops create jobs that last and offer high quality workplaces with support, job training, and access to increasing responsibility. Co-ops are proven to be twice as likely to survive to their tenth birthday as an ordinary business. Our members focus on locally grown, processed, and distributed foods. Their purchases, and their members' purchases, keep dollars in the local economy, ensuring good food into the future for Ontario's communities.

\$1 at the co-op = \$2-3 dollars in the local economy

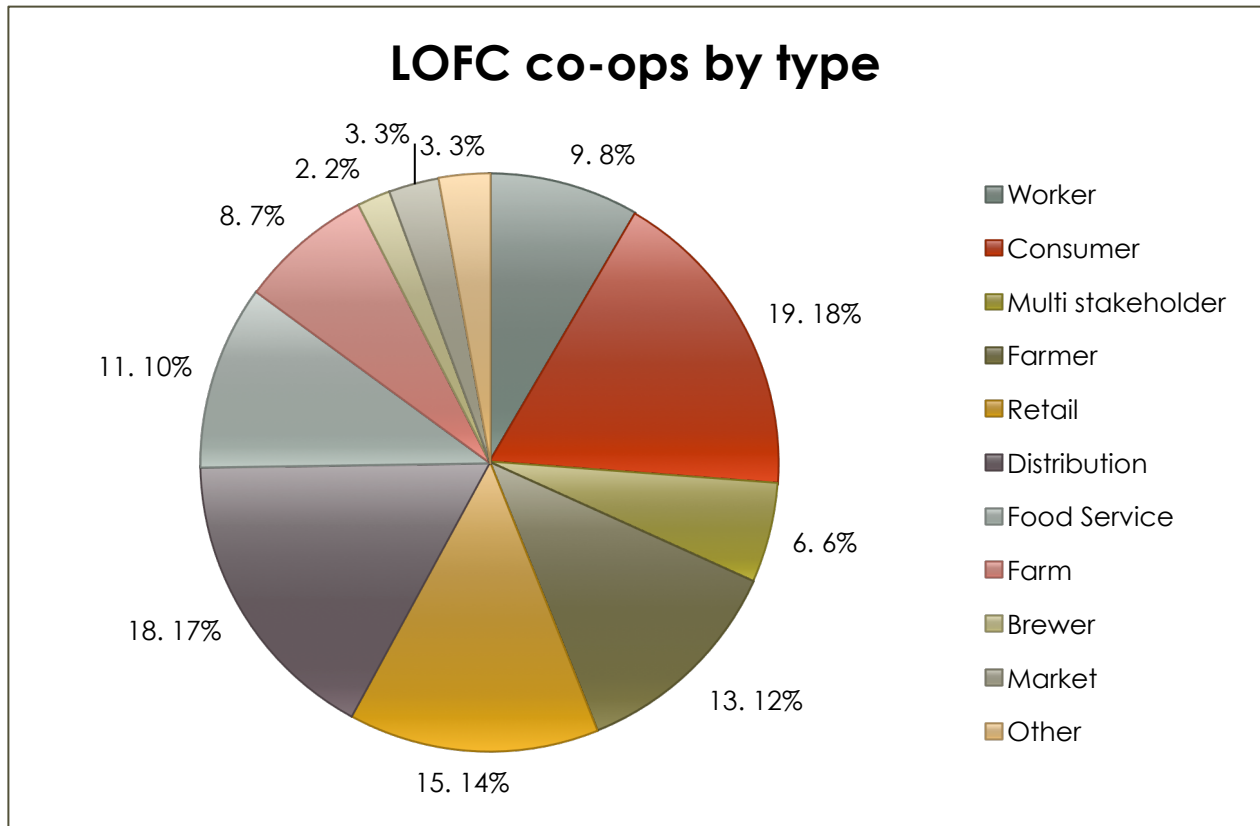


In 2010, the business plan (Christianson 2010) reported that the co-ops in the Network, at that time about 35 members, represented over \$60 million in sales. With many new co-ops and expansions, the number is much higher now. These co-ops are key to building regional food systems, and getting healthy, locally produced food to Ontario's communities.

Our Members

There are currently at least 145 food and farm co-ops in Ontario, including 92 agricultural co-ops and 53 food co-ops (retail). Well-established co-ops like Gay Lea have been joined in recent years by new co-ops that are revitalizing economic democracy in Ontario's communities. The wave of new co-ops has been supported by the LOFC Network's efforts over the years to provide support, training and a strong network of peers for knowledge exchange and expertise.

The food and farm co-ops engaged with the Network represent a range of structures, including innovations like the multi-stakeholder co-ops and food hub co-ops. They reach into every sector of Ontario's food system, from food production through processing, distribution, retail and food service, craft brewing, online and storefront.



LOFC supports its members to grow and thrive

1. Peer to peer learning

In 2015-2016, we provided 12 workshops and 4 webinars (2016). Our sessions reached hundreds of people from food co-ops, farms, and communities around the province. We engaged co-ops to share their expertise and build a peer network to solve problems and grow the movement.



2. Training and resources

At any point in the growth path of a co-op, access to the right trainings and information can be the critical key for success. The LOFC offers in person and virtual trainings for co-



op staff, boards of directors and members to strengthen their operations. We also host a [library of resources](#) that is accessible to the members. Resources available to members range from Fundamentals of Co-op Start Up, Operational Toolkits such as How to Develop a Pricing Strategy, food literacy articles for training about where food comes from, and much more.

3. Capacity building

One of the reasons that co-operatives offer a successful business model is Co-op Principle Six: co-operation among co-ops. As co-ops work together to achieve a common goal, we can gain strength in numbers to increase the success rate of our

"While working as Co-op Manager, the LOFC Network's staff and colleagues I have met through the Network, provided me with exceptional support, insight, and resources that elevated my contributions to my professional work. They are incredibly patient and caring individuals that will do whatever they can to help a fellow co-operator. I am so grateful to continually have them in my corner."

-Alli Floroff, Former Co-op Manager, By the Bushel Community Food Co-op

projects. The LOFC coordinates activities for collective impact through capacity building amongst the members. Our past activities included the Local Food Hub Project



that resulted in assessments and business plans completed for five co-op hubs in the province. In the future, we are coordinating collective purchasing for volume discounts, co-operative marketing which will be available to all our members, and inter-co-op trade and distribution.



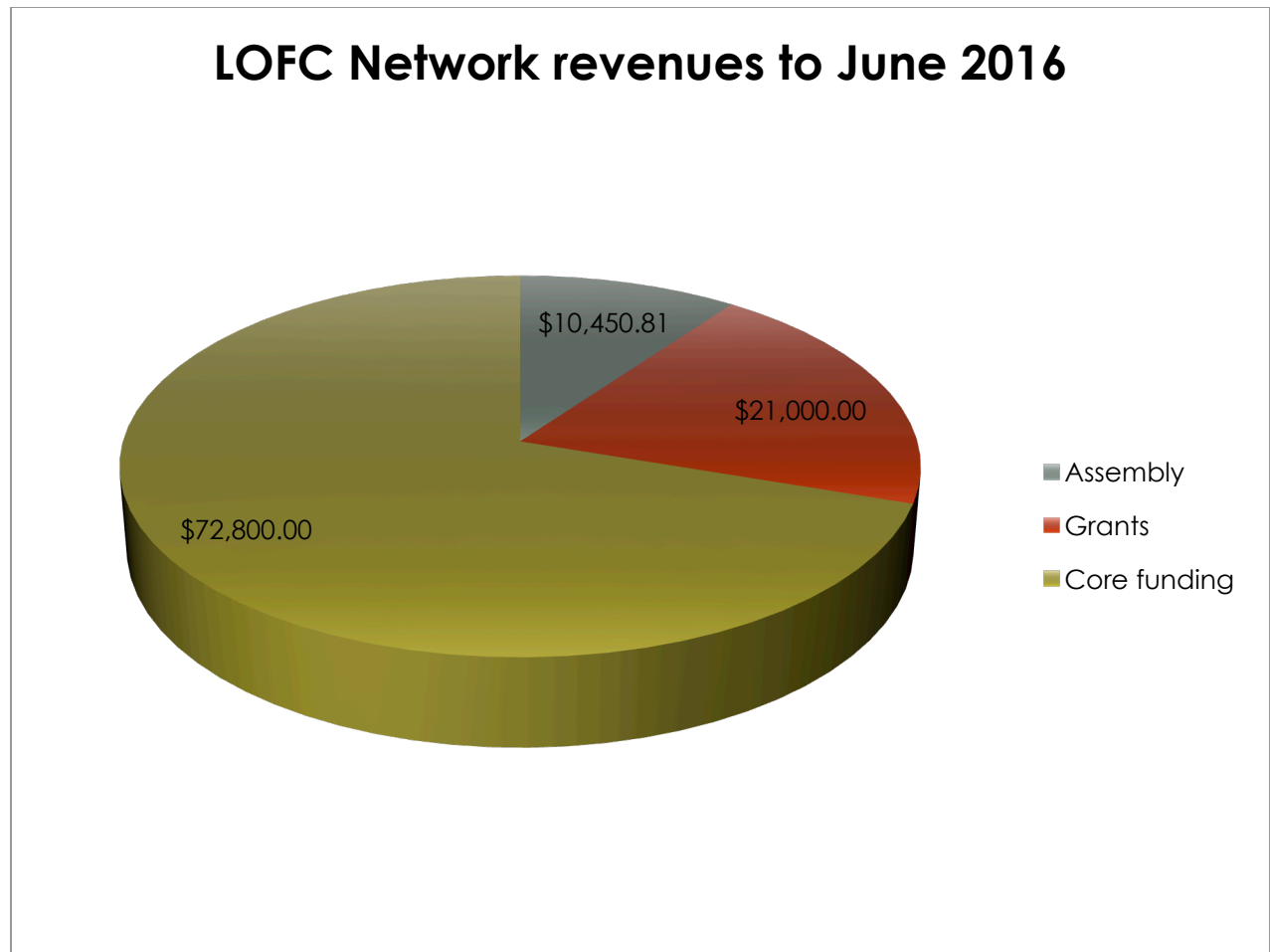
Our online and social media presence is growing.

800 people receive our newsletter; over 1 500 people “like” us on Facebook. Our website shows greatly increased traffic since the redesign and relaunch. As of September 1, 2016, we had 8273 twitter impressions and reached over 800 people weekly through Facebook.



Funding and Finances

The LOFC Network has achieved much with limited resources. Partners, staff and board members have contributed thousands of hours of volunteer time to making the Network a success.



2015-2016 Board and Staff

Staff

Peggy Baillie (April 2016- present)
 Katie Baikie (2016)
 Joan Brady (2015-2016)
 Karen Eatwell (2016)
 Sally Miller (2014-2016)
 Hannah Renglich (2011-2015)

Board (terms ended and beginning in 2016)

Peggy Baillie	Aaron Lawrence
Ayal Dinner	Margaret Madden
Kelli Ebbs	Paul Roberts
Alli Floroff	Charles Sule
Drea Kerr	Glenn Valliere



We have done a lot with a little money and lots of personal and organizational commitment, but in 2016 we were honored to learn that we have been approved for a two year grant from Libro Credit Union (in partnership with EFAO for new co-op development and operational training) as well as two significant three year funding packages from FedNor and NOHFC. Although we are still working to secure matching funds for these opportunities, the future looks bright.



Without our funders, we could not have accomplished all this! Thanks to:

