

CSC Strategic Plan 2016–2021

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Preamble

Since its creation in the early 1980s, the Centre has created public value by generating knowledge about co-operatives for the co-operative sector, government officials, and wider publics. An external review in 2011 found that the Centre has become “an international model for interdisciplinary teaching, research, and engagement” that has served co-operatives well and brought “renown” to its host university. Co-operatives, societal actors, policy makers and educators come to us frequently for knowledge about co-operatives. Our new challenge is to become the most outstanding centre of our kind in the world. We are close to this goal and can achieve it within five years if we focus our efforts wisely.

Planning Principles

- Our audiences are those who seek advanced knowledge about co-operatives, whether inside or outside the sector, across Canada and further afield. Of particular interest are postsecondary students and faculty, and current or future leaders in institutions including governments, co-operatives, and other social-economy organizations.
- Our research and teaching are centrally about the things we see going on in co-operatives. There are not only things for people to learn about co-ops, but things to learn from co-ops that are widely applicable. Our research and teaching acknowledge that the study of co-ops is part of the study of the social economy, social enterprise, public policy, and the commons, and we draw lessons applicable across these fields. By connecting different areas of knowledge, we challenge existing thinking and bring new ideas to co-ops.
- Our studies encompass a wide or general level: theory applicable to many or all kinds of co-operatives. Our specific projects include a spectrum from conceptual or theoretical research through empirical studies, action research, applied studies, and training. We recognize that there are many providers of the latter activities in this list; our distinctive role lies in the linkage of conceptual, theoretical perspectives to the other approaches.
- We have a strategy to engage in committed relationships with co-op–sector partners. We are deliberate in seeking ways for our work to have impact on federal, provincial, municipal, Indigenous, and international agencies and governments. The Centre is recognised for its unique model of trusted engagement by which we co-ordinate the interests of the co-op sector and academics while remaining independent and credible.

The Plan

Based on our principles, the Centre is committed to accomplishing the following prioritised tasks in the next five years:

- 1. We will generate new co-operative knowledge in three focal areas, and gain national and international recognition for our contributions.**
 - We will create advanced understanding of the co-operative model: theorise, historicise, and indigenise the co-operative identity, values, and principles to help people strengthen the model where it is represented and find new ways to introduce it where it is not. This research will support and be applicable to development of new and existing co-operative enterprises, choice of the co-operative business model, and policy relating to co-ops.
 - We will develop a Centre for the Study of Co-operatives model of co-operative governance – a unique synthesis of advanced thinking about co-operatives and organizational theory, going beyond all previous formulations and applicable to analysis of real-life cases. This research will support and be applicable to leadership, management, and governance of co-operatives including restructurings, mergers, and transformations as well as new initiatives in democratic participation.
 - We will extend existing work on measurement of the co-operative difference and on the social, economic, and cultural impact of co-operatives. This research will produce information and tools to support co-operative and community leaders, researchers, communicators, and policymakers in assessing the effectiveness and appropriateness of co-operative models.

Planned activities, with examples: peer-reviewed grants and publications; symposia of academics and practitioners; research projects by faculty, guest researchers and practitioners, postdoctoral researchers, PhD, Master's, and undergraduate students; targeted international partnerships, exchanges, and collaborative research; case studies and consulting projects in partnership with co-operative organizations.

- minimum 3 new peer-reviewed articles in leading global journals in 2016–17
- 1 new postdoctoral fellowship and 1 PhD scholarship in co-operatives, 2016–2017
- 2–3 new co-op business cases in 2016
- 4 new governance research/consulting projects in western Canadian consumer, financial, and apex co-operatives in 2016
- 1 new international collaboration MOU with a co-op research centre in another country each year from 2016–2018 (planned: US, Europe, Pacific)

We will know we have succeeded in *academic* impact based primarily on the number and quality of peer-reviewed publication, grants, and theses as well as the inclusion of co-operative content in textbooks written by Centre faculty. We will know we have succeeded in *co-operative* impact based on how often co-operative and public leaders seek us out for knowledge: the number of partnership agreements and projects with co-operatives, the value of these partnerships as judged by participants and their impacts on organizational practice, and downloads/uses of publications and materials.

2. We will launch a nationally and internationally known certificate program that will set the standard for advanced interdisciplinary study of co-operatives.

Planned activities, with examples: Launch of Graduate Certificate in the Social Economy and Co-operatives (2014–15). Development of component courses for compressed and online delivery, accessible to geographically distributed audiences (2016–18).

We will know we have succeeded based on demand for the certificate and courses, and assessments related to the graduates.

3. We will support broad co-operative education at the postsecondary level both by conducting it ourselves and by providing resources to support the work of others across Canada and internationally.

Planned activities, with examples: Delivery of substantial core content about co-operatives within courses in at least 8 degree programs in at least 4 colleges/faculties, to approximately 300 students per year. Intensive research and/or experiential student projects on co-operatives: at least 25 per year. Development of an internet-based collection of teaching resources about co-operatives, accessible to educators around the world (beginning development in 2016).

We will know we have succeeded based on student numbers, graduations, and assessments; the size and usage of the digital resource repository; and the Canadian and global network of faculty, staff, and former students who have worked at the Centre.

4. Through our research, publications, and outreach activities, we will hold a mirror to the world of co-operatives. We will be recognized by co-op and government leaders in Canada as a primary source of knowledge and understanding about what is going on broadly in the sector.

Planned activities, with examples: Booklets on topical questions (2015 — Co-op Atlantic). Co-op Top Issues survey and information release (2016).

We will know we have succeeded based on participation, downloads, and uptake of these activities, as well as periodic surveys and discussions with co-op and government leaders concerning our work.

Key Enablers

In pursuing the above goals, key enablers are our core faculty and staff; our network of contacts and relationships of trust in the co-op sector; our funding model that enables pursuit of long-term public-service goals; and our proactive program of strategic communications activities. Behind these differentiators stand some important, foundational partnerships: the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy and the University of Saskatchewan provide our academic leadership, platform, programs, and standards; and our sector sponsors provide knowledge and resources without which we could do no collective work. They are (2016) Saskatchewan credit unions, Federated Co-operatives Limited, Concentra Financial, The Co-operators, and CHS Inc.