



Co-operative Innovation Project Overview

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1.0 Project Title: Co-operative Innovation Project

Co-operative business models can build strong, flexible businesses drawn from community members in response to community need. Our project, broadly conceived, looked to find innovative ways to use the co-operative model to meet the varied and changing needs of rural and Aboriginal* communities in western Canada. As such, it was titled the Co-operative Innovation Project (CIP).

2.0 Overview

In November 2013, the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan entered into a partnership with Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL) to explore co-operative development in rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada.

FCL has a core business area that is highly focused in rural western Canada. Over the years, they noticed a decrease in citizen’s overall knowledge of the co-operative model, and a concurrent lack of development of new co-operatives. The question became, does the co-operative model still have merit in rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada, given their changing circumstances? FCL reached out to the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan to investigate. The purpose of the Co-operative Innovation Project was to examine whether there was interest in co-operatives in these communities, and if so, what form would co-operative development best take.

2.1 Funding Partner – Federated Co-operatives Limited

The funding for the project came from the Co-operative Retailing System as represented by FCL. FCL, owned by over 200 retail co-ops located throughout western Canada, has as its mission: “To provide responsible, innovative leadership and support to the Co-operative Retailing System, for the benefit of members, employees and Canadian communities.”¹

The FCL investment in the CIP project was driven partially by their social responsibility priorities, and partially by co-operative values. One stream of FCL’s social responsibility is “Co-operative Leadership.” FCL issues annual Social Responsibility reports. The co-operative leadership section states: “We care about the co-operative business model. We invest in programs, research and opportunities that educate others and future generations about what the co-operative business model can do.”²

¹The Co-operative Innovation Project uses the term “Aboriginal” to denote Canada’s First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. This usage reflects contemporary census and other documentation cited throughout the report. We honour and respect the identities of each of Canada’s communities.



Co-operatives are also guided by internationally recognized co-operative values. These include “self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity,” and believe in the ethical values of “honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.”³

Glen Tully, past president of FCL, said the following about FCL’s investments in co-operative leadership; “By encouraging the development and growth of the co-operative model, we are helping develop the leadership skills that will help individuals through life as they serve on co-operative boards, local government, health boards, school boards or other community-based organizations. For us it is about building leadership capacity for our sector and making our communities stronger.”⁴

For FCL, investing in the CIP project was not about creating new co-operative retail stores, but about creating strength in rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada, and supporting the current and future use of the co-operative business model as a first solution to local problems.

2.2 Other Project Partners

The day-to-day operations of the project were carried out by staff hired for this purpose under the direction of a principal investigator. The research took place at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan. A Project Management Group (PMG), made up of representatives from project partners, provided strategy, feedback, and guidance. The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives provided project administration.

The Project Management Group (PMG) was drawn from the funder (Federated Co-operatives Limited), researchers at the University of Saskatchewan, and the Plunkett Foundation of the UK. The PMG consisted of one individual from each of the following partners:

- The Co-operative Retailing System (represented by FCL);
- Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy;
- Centre for the Study of Co-operatives;
- International Centre for Northern Governance and Development; and
- The Plunkett Foundation.

Support was also provided by the Edwards School of Business at the University of Saskatchewan.

Day-to-day operational responsibility resided with the Project Manager. This person took direction from the PMG, and reported to the Principle Investigator (who, at the time, was also the Director of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives).



2.2.1 *Centre for the Study of Co-operatives*

Established in 1984, the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives is a multi-disciplinary Centre housed at the University of Saskatchewan and funded by major provincial and national co-operatives. Its goal is: “to provide people with conceptual and informational tools to understand co-operatives and to develop them as solutions to economic and social needs.”⁵

2.2.2 *The Plunkett Foundation*

Founded in 1919, the Plunkett Foundation works primarily in rural areas of the United Kingdom to help communities establish and run co-operatives. Their core value is that communities “didn’t have to wait for someone else to make a better life for them; they have the potential to do it themselves — with a little help.”⁶

2.2.3 *Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy (JSGS)*

Housed jointly at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Regina, the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy provides research and graduate teaching in public policy and administration from a variety of academic backgrounds.⁷

2.2.4 *International Centre for Northern Governance and Development (ICNGD)*

Launched in 2009 and housed at the University of Saskatchewan, ICNGD “seeks to draw on institutional, provincial, national and international partnerships to contribute to the prosperity and sustained economic growth and social development” of northern communities. ICNGD has an emphasis on innovation, community-applied research, and northern-tailored education programs.⁸

2.2.5 *Edwards School of Business*

Located at the University of Saskatchewan, the Edwards School of Business provides undergraduate-level training in all aspects of business studies and graduate training in business administration, accounting and finance. Its mission is to “develop business professionals to build nations” using “dynamic learning and critical thinking,” with values of “authenticity and integrity,” embracing the “teacher-scholar model.”⁹

2.3 **Funding**

Direct funding for the project came from Federated Co-operatives Limited. The project also benefited from in-kind contributions from the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, and from the work of several Mitacs and Edwards School of Business students working with the Centre over the course of the project.

2.4 **CIP Team**

The following is a list of the individuals associated with the project.



2.4.1 Project Management Group (PMG)

The PMG provided leadership, direction, and guidance to the overall project. Members were drawn from each of the project partners. The PMG members were: Murray Fulton, Director of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives and professor in the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy; Dawn Brinkmeier, Federated Co-operatives Ltd., Dionne Pohler, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, Peter Couchman, Chief Executive of The Plunkett Foundation, and Ken Coates of the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy and Director of the International Centre for Northern Governance and Development.

2.4.2 Research Team

Throughout the Co-operative Innovation Project, the following people had valuable roles as team members: Darcy Overland, HaoTao Wu, Kyle White, Nicole McLaren, Dazawray Parker, Rhiannon Klein, Miranda Gouchie, Bev Fairful, Paula Mowat, Merle Massie, Mariana Gomez, Apoorva Gupta, Andrew Downing, and Brad Zimmer.

3.0 The Research Concept

Social innovation aims to address a complex social problem in a new way. One form of social innovation is the co-operative. Our project broadly examined the possibility and potential role of co-operatives as an innovative solution to meeting needs in rural communities, including rural Aboriginal communities, in western Canada. A co-operative is one form of social enterprise.¹⁰

CIP set out to rigorously research and examine two questions:

- Is the co-operative business model feasible in rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada? And if so;
- What is needed to inspire rural and Aboriginal communities to explore and create co-operatives that thrive?

3.1 Research Background

Shifting demographic patterns, increased globalization and fluctuations in the global economy, and changing government priorities and capacities have put stress on rural and Aboriginal communities. Prosperity in western Canada depends upon the ability of its communities and the people in these communities to take advantage of the best ideas and practices available.¹¹

One such practice is that of co-operative formation. For thousands of years, people in western Canada have used co-operative-style solutions and variations on the co-operative model to meet needs and provide goods and services to people in communities. Over the last 120 years, these practices have intensified, building many strong businesses that have contributed to growth, development, and community strength.



Co-operation also develops so-called social capital — the relationships and norms that support social interactions in a community. The result today is a group of well-established co-operatives and credit unions that are playing key roles in the economy and in the community.

But what about the future? Can communities still see potential in the co-operative model? How will co-operatives support rural and Aboriginal communities in the future, and how can that support be organized?¹²

A co-operative 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.”¹³ Co-operatives differ from so-called investor-owned firms or for-profit firms in that they are concerned with more than just the financial return on investment (or profit). In order for a co-operative to be successful, both business and social dimensions must be satisfied.¹⁴

This dual goal emerges because co-op members are both owners of the co-operative and users of its services. As a result, co-op member-owners are interested in two aspects: the return they can receive as owners, and the ability to provide and access services in the community in which they live.

Co-operatives are an important contributor to a community’s quality of life, offering opportunities for economic and community development in areas people feel are important, including housing, social services, retail, energy, marketing, recreation, and the sustainable management of natural resources and traditional economies.

Co-operatives are especially useful in providing services where market or government failures leave gaps. Co-ops allow the people most affected by these gaps to collectively create organizations to fill the gaps. As a result of this different focus, co-operatives can thrive in areas where traditional markets may fail.¹⁵

Co-operatives typically require some sort of outside assistance to emerge and take hold.¹⁶ The original theoretical framework for CIP posited that co-operative development has two facets: one external to a community (e.g. regulatory framework, incentives for co-operative development, legal and accounting professionals with co-operative expertise); the second internal to the community. While there is much to be studied at the external level, CIP focused on examining the internal characteristics.

The Co-operative Innovation Project is premised on the importance of rural and Aboriginal communities to western Canada, and on the idea that co-operative structures and governance models create distinct incentives and values that can address problems facing these communities both today and in the future. As a consequence, the capacity of a community to engage in a collective activity such as a



co-op is critical to the ability of a rural or Aboriginal co-operative to develop and sustain co-operatives.

Although the co-operative model, with its unique ownership and governance structure, offers real possibilities for rural and Aboriginal communities, it is critical to understand that it cannot simply be transplanted into any community.¹⁷ Not all communities equally exhibit the characteristics conducive to co-operative business development, nor do they face the same challenges.

Those challenges vary. Geographical location or access to skilled labour may limit co-operative development efforts in some communities. In other cases, a community will not have the leadership capacity in place to effectively lead co-operative development activities. Or, a community may not have the social structures required to allow community members to act collectively or the political structures necessary for the sharing of authority.

While providing assistance for co-operative development is critical — indeed this is a premise behind CIP — it is also important to be able to effectively identify the strategies that will have the greatest payoff in each community, and for communities to be the driving force behind co-operative development.¹⁸ On this latter point, communities need to collectively decide whether co-operative development is for them; if it is not (and this is sometimes the case), then communities should not pursue co-op development.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The initial starting point for the CIP research was that three internal community dimensions were thought to be critical to co-operative development success in rural and Aboriginal communities: (a) community need; (b) business capacity; and (c) social capacity. None of these by itself is enough, and as the study progressed, we determined that these dimensions work together in unique ways in each community.

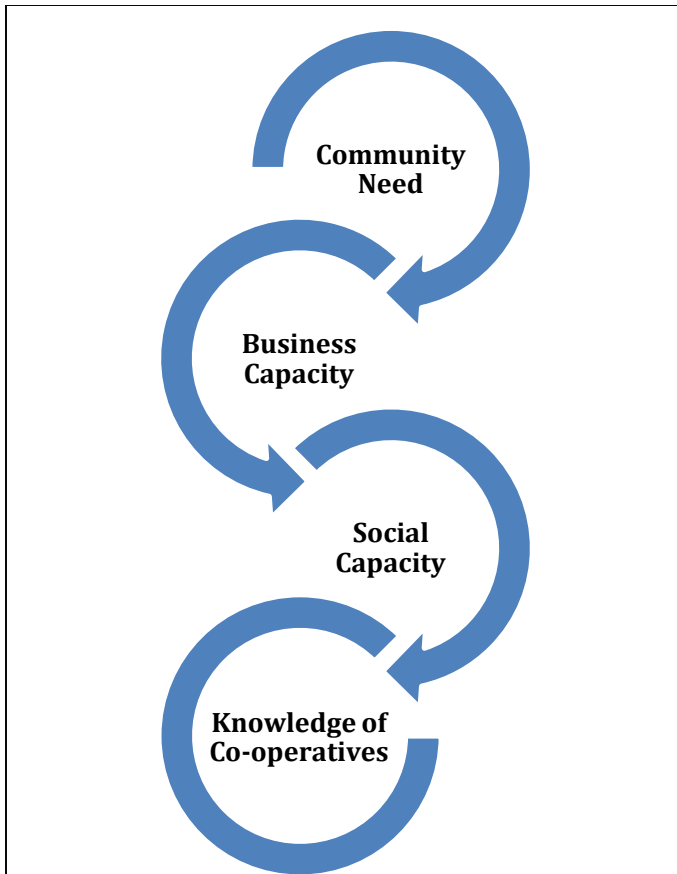


Figure 1 Four Variables of Co-operative Development

The original project framework included knowledge of the co-operative model as part of the social and/or business capacity of communities. As the project progressed, it became clear that co-operative knowledge was a critical dimension, and deserved attention on the same level as need, social and business capacity. A graphical illustration of the interaction among the four dimensions is presented in Figure 1.

The four elements identified above were used to determine if the co-operative model is still feasible in rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada. To do so, it was necessary to determine both the social and economic characteristics of communities, as well as the needs that are present, and the level of knowledge of the co-operative model, to successfully target co-operative development in a community.

Each of these dimensions, in turn, involves multiple criteria. For example, the factors contributing to business capacity include leadership, entrepreneurship, location, quality of the workforce, market conditions and market structure, along with the ability of the community to leverage these factors to meet their needs. For social capacity, the key factors include leadership, trust, power structures, social sanctions and social stratification, and how the community can leverage these factors to meet their needs.



To determine the degree to which these factors were present across rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada, qualitative and quantitative data were obtained through statistical analysis of publicly available data, key informant interviews, telephone and web surveys, and community-level meetings. Data was collected in areas such as: governance, education and training, economics, geography, health, and community well-being.

Data was collected under three primary dimensions: social capacity, business capacity, and community need; data was also collected on knowledge of co-operatives, but because this dimension was added at a later stage in the project, it was not as extensive. To show the relationships that exist between these three dimensions, numerical representations of the attributes were projected onto two- (and sometimes three-) dimensional diagrams.

Figure 2 shows a possible scatter plot of the views of individual residents in a community regarding their view of the level of community need and social capacity present in the community. In this case, the individuals hold a range of views over the two dimensions, and no relationship appears to exist between social capacity and community need.

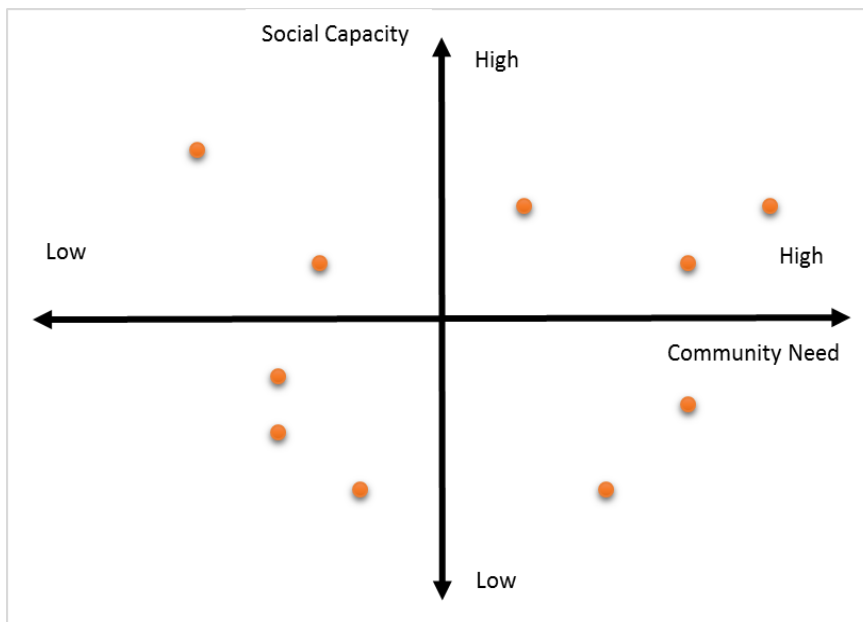


Figure 2 Scatterplot of Individual Perceptions of Social Capacity and Community Need

The data projection analysis allowed the researchers to visualize the relationships between the various elements and to draw inferences about their impact on a community’s readiness, strengths, and challenges for co-operative development. Understanding the picture of rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada



helped identify which barriers are large systemic barriers to co-operative development and which barriers can be overcome at the community level.

Examining a community in terms of the three (and sometimes four) dimensions allowed us to consider what development efforts might look like considering the unique attributes of each community.

Our theory is that when knowledge of the co-operative model exists and there are local catalysts in place to assist local residents as they develop strategies to deal with the needs in their community, co-operatives can be developed. To be most effective, co-operative development must be adjusted to leverage a community's attributes in business and social capacity.

4.0 Project Goals

The ultimate end vision for the project was focused on several outputs that changed somewhat over time.

4.1 Initial Goal

At its inception, CIP's aim was to develop an aggregate scoring for rural and Aboriginal communities across western Canada to empirically demonstrate readiness for co-operative development at the community level. More specifically, the project was to produce the following project outputs:

1. A conceptual framework for pursuing co-operative development in western Canada.
2. A world-class collection of contemporary and comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data on western Canadian rural and Aboriginal communities.
3. A signature product in the form of a Community Readiness Index (CRI) that could be used to target co-operative development efforts.

4.2 Updated Goal

As often happens in the course of research projects, the initial analysis and the development of the conceptual framework for pursuing co-operative development caused the project team and the PMG to shift the project's vision.

A key factor in the shift was the recognition that co-operative development could occur in all communities if community leaders step forward, individual community strengths are augmented and challenges overcome by development activities. It was felt that while creating a CRI may be a useful academic project, it would not be the most useful output to understand and encourage co-operative development.

As a consequence of this revision, CIP's goal was to produce the following project outputs:



1. A conceptual framework for pursuing co-operative development in western Canada.
2. The outline for a set of co-operative development tools to enable practitioners to implement the conceptual framework.
3. A world-class collection of contemporary and comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data on western Canadian rural and Aboriginal communities.
4. A research agenda that could be used to rigorously measure the implementation of the framework, tools, and impact of co-operative development on community well-being.

5.0 Assumptions, Constraints and Risks

As with all research projects, we were guided by certain ideas/assumptions that have been found to be true in other circumstances. We were also limited by factors outside of our control and we had to deal with certain risks.

5.1 Assumptions

The following assumptions formed the basis for the project.

- The co-operative business model improves economic and social outcomes in communities;
- Co-operative creation occurs most robustly with development help;
- There is a need for a new approach to co-operative development;
- A framework for pursuing co-operative business development will support economic development in western Canada;
- The co-operative approach will work for some rural and Aboriginal communities;
- The key areas of focus for the first two years will be communication, stakeholder engagement, and research; and
- There will be no actual co-operative development in the first two years of this project.

5.2 Constraints

In undertaking the research, CIP was constrained by the factors:

- Budget
- Time
- Resources (Human)¹⁹
- Individual and community willingness to participate in research
- Data reliability²⁰



5.3 Risks

The following table presents the major risks identified at the beginning of the project from both an administrative and research perspective.

Table 1 Risks Identified for CIP

Risk
Can we access all rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada?
Have too broad of a scope for the project, or trying to accomplish more than is achievable in two years.
How do we select community engagement pilots? Politics of picking “winners” and “losers”.
Managing expectations (stakeholders and communities) – risk of not managing expectations.
Trust and communications in and with communities.
Being open to the possibility that the co-operative model may not be the answer.
This is risky academically as the results may not come out as anticipated.
Some academic results could bring underlying issues to the forefront (e.g. corruption).
Managing financial resources: avoid taking on too much.
Need to be able to demonstrate quality of research, work, protocol, and methodology.
A proper co-operative development model is very complicated and needs to be rolled out properly to enhance likelihood of success.
Continuity of resources (human): maintaining the people at the table today; don’t lose anyone.

The following table collects many of the mitigation measures developed throughout the course of the Co-operative Innovation Project.

Table 2 Mitigation Measures Developed Throughout CIP

Mitigation Measures
Develop an appropriate communication plan for engagement and look to several vehicles to engage and collaborate with communities.
Select a cost-effective sampling method. Conservative budget monitoring.
Begin project with a well-defined scope and project charter. Revisit the project charter with the PMG often to ensure keeping on track. Adjust as required.
Develop criteria to identify potential pilot projects only after sufficient research completed.
Have a clear communication plan with key messages. Ensure we communicate the goals of the project.
Hire project staff dedicated to building relationships in the community and to facilitate communication and information sharing early and often.



Manage expectations of the PMG and other stakeholders. Be open to the results of the research that is conducted.
Undertake solid research and collect and maintain quality data. Be transparent with the process.
Undertake solid, values-driven community-engaged research concurrent with our institutions' ethical standards. Ensure team employs high standard of research ethics and collaborative interaction with stakeholders built on trust. Communicate confidentiality and integrity expectations often with staff.
Be sensitive to any potential issues prior to engagement to avoid any "surprises." Be aware of stakeholder sensitivities prior to the release of any final data/results.
Collaborate with other academic projects and institutions where possible to leverage any in-kind opportunities and similar work being done.
Have a well-documented scope and methodology embedded in project charter. Ensure QA/QC of data. Have a data management plan.
Do not begin any formal co-operative development until sufficient research has been completed.
Maintain a respectful, and collaborative project management process that fosters open and frequent communication.

6.0 Duration and Timeline

6.1 Duration

The project began in March 2014 with the hiring of the Project Director, and continued through December 2015.

6.2 Original Timeline

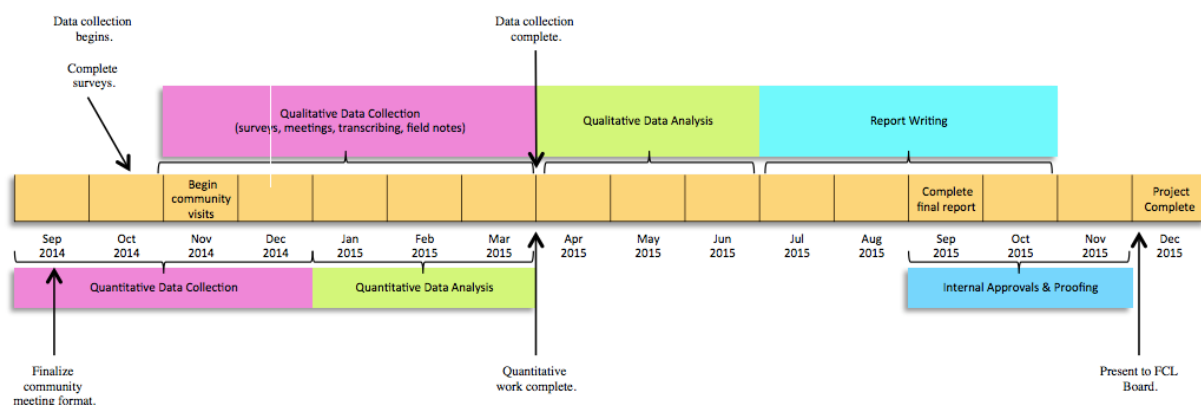


Figure 3 Original project planning timeline



6.3 Updated Timeline

As with all projects, CIP had to respond to research barriers, learnings, human resource changes and other events. As a result, the project timelines ended up shifting, although the main project milestones still occurred.

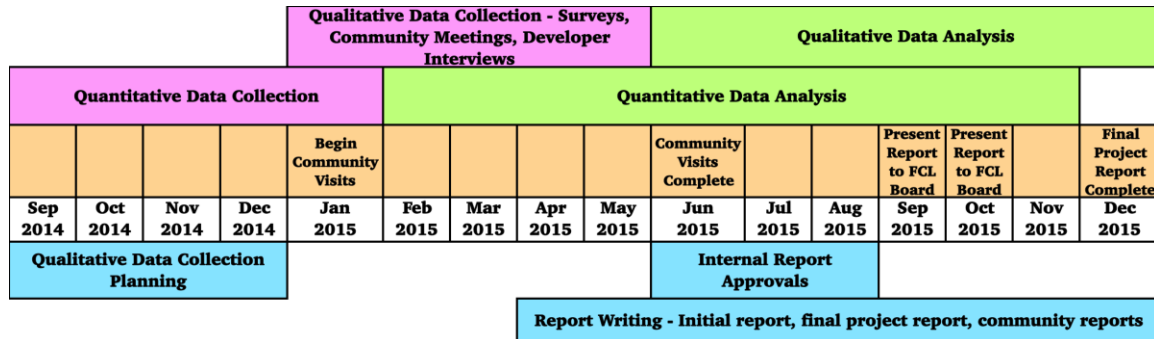


Figure 4 Updated Project Schedule Summary

6.4 Events 2014

- Define ‘rural’. Start collecting data on communities in western Canada.
- Select a random sample of target communities for community meetings.
- Define research variables relating to community business capacity, social capacity, and community need. These components originally included: community demographics, culture/leisure information, education, geography, governance, health, infrastructure, labour force, mobility, business characteristics, and social cohesion.
- Target both rural and Aboriginal communities: In doing so, the sample size must be large enough to provide us with the ability to discern patterns and draw conclusions and yet small enough that the research can be carried out on time and on budget.
- Co-operative Development workshop in La Ronge, Saskatchewan with Peter Couchman and Hannah Barrett from the Plunkett Foundation. Visited Stanley Mission and toured the Amachewespepmanwin Co-op store and gas bar.
- Development of web-based survey instrument.
- Development of telephone perceptions survey instrument.
- Development of procedures (including moderator’s guide) to be used during community meetings.
 - It was decided that communities should have a deliverable, possibly in terms of a community report, in return for participation as a host community for a meeting. CIP created a working outline of these community reports, designed to closely reflect community variables (defined above).



- Pilot project in Maidstone, Saskatchewan, to test the moderator’s guide and community meeting and reporting requirements. Revisions and modifications to community planning and reporting procedures.
- Planning of pilot project at One Arrow First Nation. This pilot was planned for December but was rescheduled for January 2015 due to community circumstances.
- Attendance at Quebec Summit of Co-operatives. Project director Murray Fulton, FCL Strategy Director Vic Huard, and Plunkett Foundation Chief Executive Peter Couchman participated in a Research Forum: “Tapping into Innovation — Reaching Outside Traditional Mindsets and Players.”
- Peter Couchman from Plunkett Foundation provided a targeted workshop for CIP to develop a framework for understanding the activities that are required to support co-operative development. These activities are: Inspire, Explore, Create, and Thrive. This workshop drew on the Plunkett Foundation’s experience and direction, and considered the roles of current co-operative development activities in western Canada.

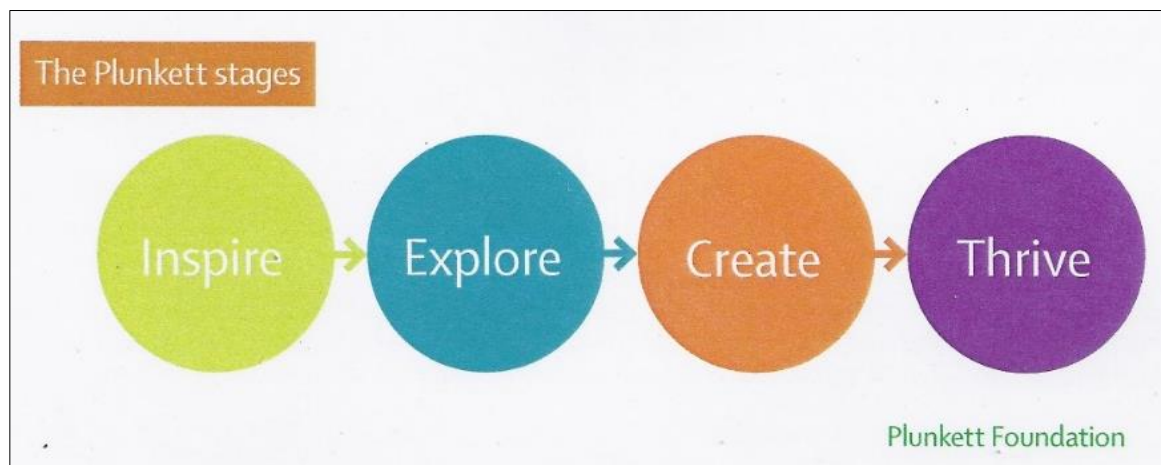


Figure 5 The Plunkett model of co-operative development

The Plunkett model of co-operative development became a critical element of the conceptual framework for the second half of the project. In particular, the model allowed for a re-framing from what is needed from the community in order to be a vessel of co-operative development (need, social capacity, business capacity) to what is needed in order to work with a community through co-produced activities: Inspire, Explore, Create, and Thrive. (See the chapter outlining the Plunkett view of co-operative development.)

This reconceptualization of the activities critical to co-operative development, and the central role of community, was important as CIP began investigating how co-operative development is currently undertaken in western Canada, assessing the co-op development activities against the Plunkett model, and using the findings from



the assessment to create a new model of a robust co-operative development environment. For more on the co-operative development model, please see the section on Co-operative Development.

6.5 Events 2015

- In January of 2015, the second pilot community engagement event took place. On the basis of the pilot, the community engagement event documents were modified for use in the rest of the project.
- On-line survey and telephone surveys began. Over 2,000 people completed the telephone survey and over 350 administrators completed the web-based survey.
- Twenty-six community engagement events were organized and hosted.
- Most of the primary data collection was completed by June 2015 and attention shifted to an analysis of this data.
- An assessment of current practices of co-operative development in western Canada, including extensive interviews with co-operative development practitioners from the four western provinces, occurred.
- Presentations of the CIP preliminary results took place at CASC, Co-op Congress, ACE, and the ICA Research Conference. CIP team members also attended the Rural Revitalization conference.
- Two students, hosted through the Canada-wide Mitacs program, contributed to community event analysis.
- Two students from the Edwards School of Business developed a communications plan and marketing tools, including logos and social media, for the project.
- Miranda Gouchie, a student assistant, will use part of the CIP findings for her Master's thesis.
- Murray Fulton, along with FCL staff, visited Ottawa to discuss CIP with government representatives.
- An Executive Summary of the project and an overview of its findings were presented to the FCL Board.
- Several two-page summaries were drawn from aspects of the project. These were presented to government agencies in Ottawa and published on the Co-operative Innovation Project website <https://coopinnovation.wordpress.com/>.
- A series of presentations about the project and its initial findings were recorded November 30, 2015 and are uploaded to the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives YouTube website: <https://www.youtube.com/user/coopstudies>.



6.6 Events 2016

- The final report of the overall project, and community reports for the communities that hosted events, were finalized.
- The final report was published electronically on the Co-operative Innovation Project [website](#) at the end of January.
- Community reports were sent to communities in February.

7.0 Project Scope

The following section discusses both the original project scope and the updated scope. It outlines the proposed research questions, the deliverables, and the key activities of the project.

7.1 Original Project Scope

The original research plan for the CIP aimed to answer the following questions:

- What are the social and economic characteristics in the communities in which co-operative business development is most likely to succeed?
- Which communities have these characteristics?

The basis for these questions was a belief that if the communities in which co-operative development is most likely to succeed could be identified, then it would be possible to target co-operative development efforts to specific communities. Given the limited resources (time, money, expertise) that are available for co-operative development, the ability to direct these resources to their best use would ensure the maximum benefit from these resources.

7.2 Updated Project Scope

Although the need to ensure that co-op development resources are well-targeted and used to their best advantage remained as the underlying premise for the project, it was discovered that a set of more fundamental questions had to be addressed in order to achieve this goal. These questions included:

- What are the social and economic characteristics that affect co-operative development in rural and Aboriginal communities?
- What are the needs in rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada?
- How do you inspire and support community leaders to choose the co-operative business model?
- What is needed for developers to leverage these characteristics most effectively when community leaders choose co-operatives to fulfill their needs?



- How do we shift the conception of co-operative development from a focus on counting new co-operative starts, to an understanding that co-operative development includes the whole spectrum of activities, from inspiring people to think about the co-op model to helping existing co-ops to thrive?

7.3 Project Deliverables

The following table presents the major deliverables for the project to be considered successful.

Table 3 Project Deliverables

Major Deliverable	Deliverable Description	Updated Deliverable
Project Charter	Complete a charter to document and track necessary information and approvals about the project (e.g. scope, budget, deliverables). Q1 2014	The draft project charter was completed in Q4 2014. By this time changes had been made to the concept. Replaced by Project Overview document.
Project Administration	Hire a project director, data analyst, community engagement coordinator, and an Aboriginal community engagement coordinator to support the delivery of project objectives. Q1 2014	Hiring of staff was slower than anticipated with final hiring occurring in Q3 of 2014.
Stakeholder Engagement Plan	Develop a stakeholder engagement plan for the purpose of identifying stakeholders, their interests in the project, possible support for the project, and plan for collecting baseline in the communities. Q1/Q2 2014	The stakeholder engagement plan was not formalized, nor was it driven to the community level. Conversations during PMG meetings and amongst staff guided stakeholder engagement.
Communications Plan	Develop a communication plan for the project based on any stakeholder management requirements. Q1/Q2 2014	Communications plan was completed in Q3 of 2015 through a contract with MBA students at Edwards School of Business.



Research Plan	Develop a research plan for the project. Q2 2014	The research plan for the project was completed in draft by Q3 2014. Direction changed slightly in Q4 2014.
Reporting	Deliver weekly reports to the CSC Director, monthly reports to the PMG, and quarterly reports to FCL's CSR committee.	A minimum of weekly verbal reports delivered to the CSC Director, monthly written reports to the PMG and quarterly reports were provided to FCL's CSR committee.
Funding	Identify additional funding to assist in the execution of the project's first two years in addition to seeing the project continue beyond.	Several funding options were examined but formal partnerships were not sought. Most funding opportunities are a better fit for activities that would take place after CIP is complete.
Community Indicators (Variables)	Develop a listing of community characteristics indicative of co-operative start-up.	The listing of community characteristics has changed from characteristics indicative of start-up, to a list that influences effective development. Related to the model of a Co-operative Development Environment.
Co-operative Development Activities	Research current co-operative development activities and approaches being applied across western Canada.	Completed in Q3 2015.



Community Readiness Index (CRI)	Based on the research and baseline data collected during this project, develop a composite index indicating a community's readiness. Q3/Q4 2015	This output has been changed to a framework of factors affecting co-operative development to assist with targeting development to the specific assets of each community. Activity started. Additional work in this area possible in follow-up projects.
Data Projection	Project the results of data analysis to visualize patterns and associations.	Ongoing.
Co-operative Development Framework	Use the results from projections and the new CRI to inform the identification of a conceptual approach to co-operative development that would be appropriate for enhancing co-operative development in western Canada. Q3 2015	Model of the Co-operative Development Environment developed. To be tested in follow-up projects.
Final Report	Deliver final recommendations for co-operative development.	Executive Summary provided to FCL board in Q3 2015. Full report largely completed in Q4 2015.

8.0 Research Design

The CIP was an ambitious, multi-disciplinary, multi-faceted research project. It used a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) methods research design to study community needs and co-op development with academic rigor and provide both theoretical and practical outcomes. There were multiple techniques of data collection.

The data collection involved community engagement events with focus groups, interviews with co-op developers, telephone and web-based surveys, and statistical data. It is anticipated that publications will be produced for funders, communities, project partners, academic purposes, and the general public.



Further details on the research design methodology and data collection techniques can be found in the Research Design chapter.

9.0 Data Collection Techniques

The project was set up to collect data from a variety of sources to bring together knowledge of four dimensions related to co-operative development at the community level: knowledge of co-operatives, community need, social capacity and business capacity.

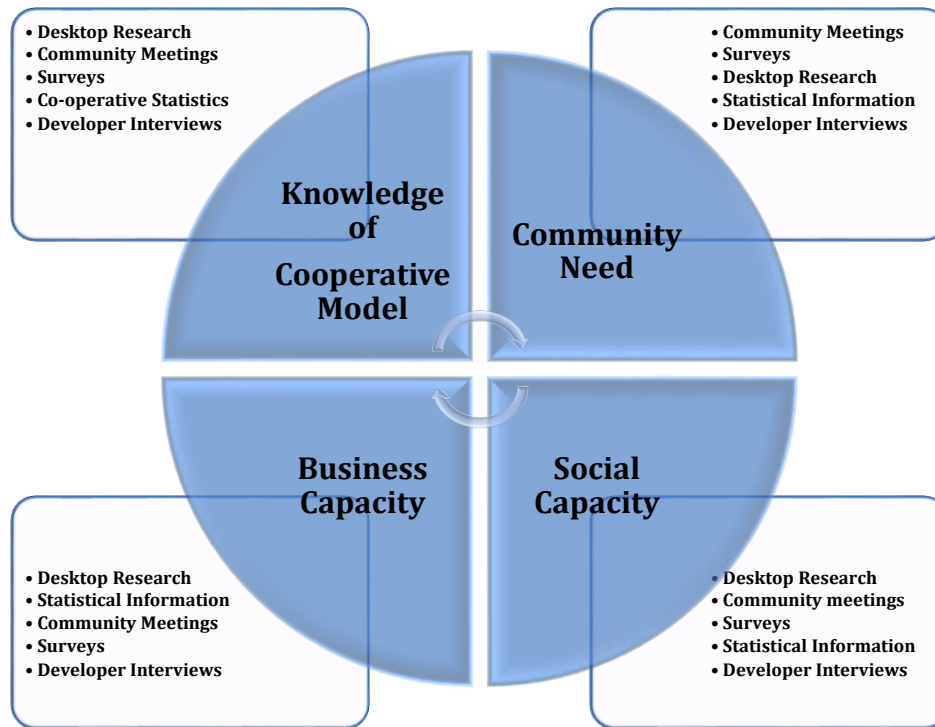


Figure 6 Data Collection to support the four research dimensions

Simultaneously, the team began to research the existing literature and current practices regarding the stages of development for an individual co-operative. These activities helped to determine if the existing development frameworks would work in rural and Aboriginal communities or if other models were needed.

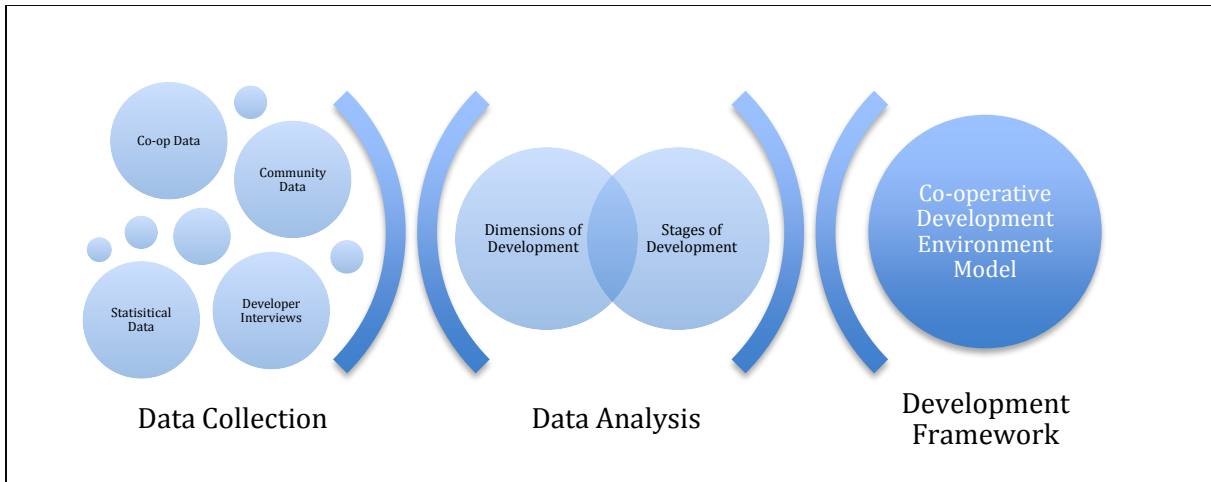


Figure 7 Research Framework

For a more in-depth analysis of each of the data collection techniques, please see the Research Design and Methodology chapter.

10.0 Outputs, Results and Reporting

This section provides an overview of the original intended outputs of the project, and where they stand at the end of the project.

10.1 Outputs

10.1.1 Community Readiness Index (CRI)

The CIP originally planned to create a composite index, titled the “Community Readiness Index” (CRI), for rural and Aboriginal communities across western Canada to empirically demonstrate each community’s potential for pursuing co-operative development. Numerical factors would be weighted and scaled in each of the dimensions identified in our study and then combined into a single indexed number.

The CRI was intended to indicate which communities might be best targeted for co-operative development. As the project matured, however, both technical and theoretical concerns arose as to the feasibility and appropriateness of this index.

While the project originally identified three dimensions (community need, business capacity, and social capacity) and then added a fourth dimension on co-operative knowledge, there is not enough existing empirical data to test or discover which of the dimensions plays the largest role in the development of co-ops, or how the dimensions interact during the development process. As a result, creating a composite index for the communities became a challenge, since it was unknown how much weight to give each dimension when creating the composite number.



Instead of creating a single index, consideration was given to creating three indices, one for each of the original dimensions. However, each dimension is composed of multiple factors and it is not known how these factors relate to each other, thus making the creation of separate indices difficult. While it is possible to identify correlations among the individual factors making up a particular dimension, it was not possible with existing data to identify the linkage between these factors and success in co-operative development.

Credit Unions of Ontario published the *Co-operative Communities Index* in October of 2015. In some ways, this index mimics some of the original intentions of the CIP. It ranks 30 of Ontario's communities on their commitment to co-operative values, as measured through five variables: charitable spirit, social investment, shared green space, community assets and civic engagement. All of these measures can be considered part of a community's social capacity. However, there are problems with this research design. There is no way to know whether or not these indicators actually lead to an increase in co-operative development. As well, the index does not measure need, business capacity, or knowledge of co-operatives, variables that CIP believes are also critical to co-operative development. This index is new; it will require time to measure its effectiveness in supporting the development of new co-operatives.²¹

The CIP telephone and web-based surveys provided the possibility to use statistical methodology (specifically factor analysis) to determine which factors have the greatest impact on the perception of capacity in their community, and to create indices using the factor weights calculated from the data. While these indices provide an opportunity to compare the communities and to shed some light on how different factors within each dimension work together, the analysis is not generalizable to all the study communities due to a lack of community-level data or a lack of data comparability.

Since CIP was not designed to develop co-operatives (in fact, the decision was explicitly made not to do so) and the data on previous co-operative development activities and success were extremely limited, there was no opportunity to rigorously examine either the accuracy of an index, or the impact of different rankings in these dimensions on development.

Without the ability to link measures of need and capacity to co-operative development success, there was a concern that creating indices would simply serve as a way of ranking communities in terms of need and capacity, rather than provide any objective measure for co-operative development readiness. For instance, a key concern was whether a CIP index would mean that communities with a high community need, but lower business and social capacity (many of whom may be Aboriginal), would not be considered for co-op development support or activity, even though they might gain substantially from this support.



A shift in the focus of the research also took place when the team identified that a key driver of co-operative development is knowledge of the co-operative model and the presence of community catalysts that have the ability to support development locally.

With this shift in thinking, efficient development became focused on findings ways for a community to self-assess in terms of the four dimensions (community need, business capacity, social capacity, and knowledge of co-ops), to learn how best to grow a co-op within those parameters, and to work on creating amenable cultures (per the co-operative environment model) for co-operative development.

This change in philosophy means success in co-operative development is not only measured by the number of new co-op starts, but also by the growth and health of the larger co-operative development environment — particularly successes such as inspiring new conversations around the potential use of the co-operative model, or helping an existing co-op to get through a rough patch.

While co-operative developers indicated that there are tools to measure the group capacity or business capacity in a potential co-op, measurement is not often placed in a community context. In rural and Aboriginal communities, it is crucial that the new co-operative not only fits within the community culture, but that it has community acceptance, active support, and an environment in which it can thrive.

Ultimately, it was decided that the CRI would not provide a meaningful ranking and this idea was abandoned in favour of identifying a framework for the assessment of the communities in which a co-op may be developed, and of developing the tools to undertake this assessment. While CIP was able to develop the beginnings of this framework, more work will be needed if it is to be used in co-op development.

10.1.2 Creation of Database

One of the outcomes identified at the beginning of the project was a database composed of data about rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada. The database was to include both quantitative and qualitative data. The information from this database was to be used to construct the CRI and to provide up-to-date information on co-operative development activity across western Canada.

At the close of the project, there is a large amount of data on rural and Aboriginal communities in western Canada that is stored in a variety of formats. Due to size and complexity, creation of a single database has not been completed.

There have been several discussions about what type of database should ultimately be created, its appearance, and its functionality. The goal is to create a database that is beneficial not only to future researchers, but also to groups involved in co-operative development. Some of the data in the database may also be of interest to government agencies and to the general public, particularly at the rural and



Aboriginal community level. In order to create this functionality, the database will likely have to have both a public interface with limitations on data access, and a second tier of access for research and development purposes.

While there are no off-the-shelf products that will immediately serve the required function of this type of database, several examples have been found. Work on this database will continue in follow-up activities to CIP.

10.1.3 Ongoing Research Agenda

The following are the main areas that the project team has identified that could use further research in follow-up activities.

10.1.3.1 Triangulation of Results

There is a need to analyze the relationships in the data from the web-based and telephone surveys, the community visits and the statistical data gathered from Statistics Canada and other data sources. To date, each dataset has been examined on its own. However, additional insights might be obtained by augmenting this data with information from one or more of the other datasets.

10.1.3.2 Rural and Aboriginal Communities

For the purpose of the project, communities were defined as rural or Aboriginal according to the classifications provided by Statistics Canada. These classifications, however, are somewhat arbitrary and patterns that emerge with this classification may not hold when the classification is changed; alternatively, new patterns may emerge with different classifications. To examine the importance of the classification, there may be value in drilling deeper at the community level to determine, for instance, if communities classified as non-Aboriginal but with high populations of Aboriginal people are more like other rural communities, or more similar to Aboriginal communities.

10.1.3.3 New 2016 Statistics Canada Data

In 2016 a new census will take place in Canada. A return of the long form census provides an opportunity to update the statistical information for our study communities. This updating is important because in many cases the data emerging from the 2011 census was clearly inaccurate.

10.1.3.4 Co-operative Data

There is a real need to develop up-to-the-minute information on the co-ops in existence, in development and in distress in rural and Aboriginal western Canada. This data is critical to the evaluation of co-operative development efforts, and is an important input into policy discussions and debates.

Early analysis of existing data on historical and contemporary co-operatives suggests there may be sector clustering in development activities; in other words, similar kinds of co-operatives are often developed in the same province at roughly



the same time. The reasons for this clustering are unclear — ideas that have been suggested include the creation or existence of co-operative legislation or regulations, changes in government services, and the presence of key co-operative developers with particular expertise. Exploring these reasons may yield further information on the role of the political culture, co-operative culture, and catalysts in development.

There is a need to look at co-operatives that have developed with and without the help of developers to determine what worked well in their development and what did not work.

Of particular interest is the idea that not only do co-ops work to meet a need in a community, but they also serve to improve the quality of life for citizens in a broader way. In addition to the examination of large-scale statistical data, there may be an opportunity to work with communities where a co-operative has closed to assess the impact of this closure on quality of life in the community.

10.1.3.5 Building new co-operatives

There is a possibility to work with the twenty-six communities where community meetings occurred. Following the community engagement activity in these communities offers a potential opportunity to examine how the co-operative development process unfolds and how the characteristics of the community influence the manner in which this process takes place.

In such cases, it is critical to draw in co-operative development expertise and knowledge already in existence, from provincial co-operative associations, private co-op developers, and others.

If CIP leads to further co-op development work, it will be important to take another broad-ranging, baseline assessment in roughly five years of where rural and Aboriginal communities are at in relation to the four dimensions of need, social capacity, business capacity, and co-operative knowledge.

10.2 Project Reporting

Project reporting consisted of the following:

- Quarterly reports of activities to the Project Management Group (PMG) as well as FCL have shown steady progress towards completion of the project within the proposed time frame.
- Data capture: CIP has created a large database of five critical data components: telephone survey, web survey, community meeting data (including mapping), co-operative development interviews, and publicly-available statistics.
 - There is more data available than there is time to analyze it. CIP will ensure that this data is made available to FCL, to the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, and to any future projects arising from CIP.



- FCL Executive Summary Board Report: CIP has compiled a broad overview of the results and analysis into an Executive Summary report. This report provided an overview of the findings.
- Community Reports: CIP will deliver twenty-six community reports to the communities that participated in our focus group activities.
 - These reports will be completed by February 2016.
- Academic presentations: CIP has presented results at academic conferences in Canada, the US and Europe.
 - There will be additional academic presentations in 2016.
- Practitioner presentations: CIP presented some of the early results to the annual meeting of Co-operatives Mutuals Canada in Saskatoon in June of 2015.
- Public presentations: On November 30, 2015, CIP made four presentations to an invited in-person and on-line audience. These presentations gave a broad overview of the project.
 - These presentations were captured in video format and can be viewed through the Co-operative Innovation Project website, or linked through the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives.
- Policy briefs: CIP is generating a series of two-page policy briefs which have been distributed to the public and to target organizations and policy leaders. They are also available through the Co-operative Innovation Project website.
- Final Report: The final report will be released to the public starting in January 2016 via the Co-operative Innovation Project website. Find it at <https://coopinnovation.wordpress.com/>.

11.0 Research and Administrative Learnings

CIP was designed so that researchers could listen and adapt as the research progressed. As a result, the original project plan and orientation changed as the project moved forward. We feel these changes do not detract from the overall goal or intent of CIP, but rather show its strength as a learning project.

There have been few projects of this scope and size in the social sciences or humanities (outside of health) that have been funded by the private sector. As such we reflect on project research and administration learnings.

11.1 Vision and Goals

The original intention of CIP was to create an index that could measure and model three factors for each community (community need, social capacity, and business capacity), to show where co-operative development could be most effectively supported. A fourth factor, knowledge of co-operatives, was added. The project found a lack of data to create and test the proposed index, as well as a lack of fit between the concept of the index and the reality of co-operative development as practiced.



Extensive work with Peter Couchman and the Plunkett Foundation of the UK strengthened the idea that the community should not be seen as a vessel for co-operative development, but instead should be viewed as the lead actor. In co-operative development, the community must decide if the model is right for them. While concepts of business capacity, social capacity, need, and co-operative knowledge remain important, these have been folded into the new model of a robust co-operative development environment.

11.2 Community Reports

The community report was envisioned as a document to provide to communities in recognition of allowing us into their community, and as a way to report back to the community after the meeting. The original draft provided for in-depth investigation of the socio-economic variables for that community. This format was revised to produce a report with that aligned more clearly with the data being generated by the project, and that focused more directly on co-operatives.

The discussion around community reports raised some fundamental questions around the purpose of CIP. The reports as originally conceived would have been more in line with a community development document, typically commissioned by a community as part of an economic or regional development plan. Team members with a deep base of community-engaged research argued that community reports that did not assess a wide variety of community variables were of little use to communities, and possibly a poor way to thank rural, remote, or Aboriginal communities for their time and energy in supporting and working with CIP.

However, it was felt that such reports, while valuable, would lose sight of the overall goal of thinking strategically around ways in which a community could solve its needs using the co-operative model, of tying those community-level findings to a larger initiative that looks into how co-operative development is taking place in western Canada, and of tying community-level assessments of needs to the larger picture drawn from across western Canada.

The finalized community reports capture a snapshot of three components: a statistical overview of the community drawn from available quantitative research, a summarization of the local needs and concerns put forward during the community meeting; and an overall view of CIP's findings from across western Canada. With this report, communities will have a first-hand view of their own community, will see how and where they fit into the larger picture, and will be provided with some insights as to which of their needs might be addressed through the co-operative model.

11.3 Aboriginal Engagement

While the majority of rural community meetings (with one exception) were relatively easy to set up, it was known from the project's outset that long-term



relationship building, community engagement, reciprocity and trust are critical components of working with Aboriginal communities. These elements deserve time, care, and attention.

An original goal for CIP was to host meetings that would include members of both Aboriginal and rural communities. In practice, such meetings could only take place where considerable cultural and social interaction on the part of the communities had already taken place. In other words, if rural and Aboriginal communities, even those in close proximity, did not already feel connected, a meeting that attempted to bring both together would not work. Aboriginal communities, in particular, asked for separate meetings to be sure that their ideas and suggestions were heard more clearly.

From a process standpoint, CIP put in place protocols around meetings in Aboriginal communities. CIP engaged first with Aboriginal leaders in each community. An introductory package of information was sent out, followed by direct communications via telephone. As needed, CIP team leads would visit the community and meet with leaders to explain CIP direction and possibilities. That engagement piece became central to any further community event planning. Engagement does not mean one visit; it is a process of communication and relationship building, with time built in to allow for internal processes within the Aboriginal host community to play out. It is thought that similar long-term engagement is critical for co-operative development with Aboriginal communities.

In some cases, that process led to a community's decision not to participate in our study. In other cases, a meeting went forward but had anemic community support or ended up in conflict with other community events such as funerals, which are unpredictable. Even these kinds of disappointments were an important part of the CIP learning and engagement process. Other communities were enthusiastic and we held several successful meetings in Aboriginal communities.

11.4 Research Model

The CIP was an ambitious, multi-disciplinary, multi-faceted research project. It set out to capture an expansive dataset using mixed methods research. It aimed to study co-op development with academic rigour and provide both theoretical and practical outcomes. There were multiple techniques of data collection, including community engagement events with focus groups, interviews, both telephone and web-based surveys and statistical data. Analysis used both quantitative and qualitative processes.

The size and scope of the research created important research learnings. The team not only brought existing skills to the project, but learned along the way. The team had training in group facilitation, and learned new skills in community engagement, event planning, and qualitative analysis.



The research model produced more data than the research team could analyze within the two-year time frame. One of lessons from the project is the importance of balancing the generation of data and the analysis of that data.

11.5 Communications Plan

At the beginning of the project, it was assumed that a tailored communication plan including key messages, engagement methods and objectives would be developed. This plan was not fully executed. Instead, communications developed organically, between the project and individual communities, including targeted Aboriginal engagement and relationship-building. To ensure consistency, the team developed certain instruments (including letters, radio advertisements, poster templates, and other forms of communication) that kept the project on message and on target.

Two students from the Edwards School of Business developed a communications plan primarily for project reporting, focusing on communications profiles and social media vehicles that align closely with the study population across rural and Aboriginal western Canada. They also assisted with the development of a logo and template that could be used in the reporting phase.

12. Project Achievements

The Co-operative Innovation Project was an innovative, sector-funded, industry-inspired, and academically-led project that sought to discover more about western Canada's rural and Aboriginal communities, and to learn whether the co-operative business model remains a fit for those communities. The Co-operative Innovation Project:

- Tested the response of community-based needs-driven co-operative development activity (Plunkett Model) in rural and Aboriginal western Canada.
 - Modified community engagement activity in Aboriginal communities to better reflect an Aboriginal cultural model of relationship building, trust, and co-production of community-led conversations. These changes may be important to future co-operative development activities.
- Captured significant current data on needs in rural and Aboriginal western Canada
 - This data will continue to produce important results as analysis continues through either the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan, Federated Co-operatives Limited, or other related or future partners.
- Analyzed and reimagined the functions and goals of co-operative development to create a new model of a robust co-operative development environment.



- Provided hands-on experience and training to academic practitioners on community-based development research using the co-operative model.
- Created community-based reports reflecting both regional and local needs, and assessing those needs against potential co-operative development.
- Identified areas of strength and weakness for co-operative development in rural and Aboriginal western Canada
- Identified future areas of research and connection to support co-op development in rural and Aboriginal western Canada.
- Pursued increased communication between co-op development practitioners, academia, and the co-operative sector, laying the framework for future connections.

The Co-operative Innovation Project, its staff, project management group, and its related partners, are proud to present the findings of the project in the larger final report.

13. Findings

The following capture the main findings of the CIP project on the future of co-operative development in rural and Aboriginal communities. For a more in-depth view of our findings, please see the Executive Summary and the chapters of the larger final report.

The Co-operative Innovation Project established the following findings and results:

1. Co-operative development will be strengthened by vigorous community-level co-operative development activities, particularly long-term relationship building.
2. Communities are looking for new successful business models that can be used to solve community needs, and are searching for new ideas that are applicable to rural and Aboriginal communities.
3. Active co-operative development tactics (going out to communities to inspire co-operative conversations and explorations, and bringing co-ops into larger business model discussions) will mitigate the current cultural loss of co-operative knowledge and promote increased use of the co-operative model.
4. Co-operative developers have good technical knowledge about building co-ops, but are limited in their ability to inspire communities, or to help existing co-ops to thrive. Actively creating better connections between community groups and existing expertise will grow co-operatives.
5. Robust co-operative development must have real-time accurate data that can be accessed and used in any given moment. That data must include historic and contemporary data on co-operative businesses, data on co-operatives in development, and data on co-operatives in transition, decline, or change.
6. Aboriginal communities have unique cultural, social, economic, and legal situations that require in-depth knowledge and co-creation of relationships and solutions built over time.



7. Co-operative development is not just about creating new co-ops; it is also about helping existing co-ops to grow and thrive. New measurements are required.
8. Co-operative development is fundamentally about community empowerment. It can interact with both formal and informal power dynamics at the community and broader level. Robust co-operative development must directly address and explore power as it relates to gatekeepers, catalysts, and community development.
9. Governments at all levels are looking to communities to define and target initiatives that build the future of rural and Aboriginal western Canada. The co-operative business model is an excellent fit in this environment. To be successful, governments must develop policies that enhance co-operative business strength, as a way to support healthy, vibrant rural and Aboriginal communities.
10. A robust co-operative development environment is connected across provincial boundaries, across the co-operative and business sector, and into communities. These connections are necessary to inspire communities to explore the co-operative model, and create co-operatives that thrive.

The Co-operative Innovation Project provides a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Aboriginal and rural communities in western Canada.

We use this knowledge to frame the discussion around co-operative development.

Individuals in rural and Aboriginal communities, as well as co-operative associations, government policy makers, community and economic developers, and the co-operative sector, are being reignited by the co-operative development conversation.



Endnotes

- ¹ Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL)
<https://www.coopconnection.ca/wps/portal/fclretail/FCLInternet/AboutUs/FCL/>.
- ² FCL Social Responsibility Reports, 2013, 2013-2014, 2014. See
<https://www.coopconnection.ca/wps/portal/fclretail/FCLInternet/search/SearchResults/news/pu b+-+fcls+social+responsibility+report+now+available>.
- ³ Declaration, "Co-operative Values and Principles for Corporate Social responsibility" 85th ICA International Co-operative Day 13th UN International Day of Cooperatives (7 July 2007). Accessed December 18, 2015 <http://ica.coop/en/media/library/declaration/international-day-co-operatives-2007>.
- ⁴ FCL Social Responsibility Report, 2013.
- ⁵ Centre for the Study of Co-operatives <http://usaskstudies.coop/>.
- ⁶ Plunkett Foundation Website, 2015. <https://www.plunkett.co.uk/about-us>.
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<http://www.schoolofpublicpolicy.sk.ca/>.
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- ⁹ Edwards School of Business Website, 2015. <http://www.edwards.usask.ca/>.
- ¹⁰ For an overview of these concepts in a Canadian perspective and how they relate to each other see Goldenberg, Jacob, Sangman Han, Donald R. Lehmann and Jae Weon Hong, "The Role of Hubs in the Adoption Processes," *Journal of Marketing*, 2009 (73), 1–13. For a more in-depth discussion, see Quarter, Jack, Laurie Mook, and Ann Armstrong, *Understanding the Social Economy: A Canadian Perspective*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- ¹¹ For a discussion of the role of rural Canada in today's society, see Al Lauzon, Ray Bollman, and Bill Ashton, *State of Rural Canada 2015*, "Introduction." Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, 2015.
- ¹² For a detailed discussion of the impacts of globalization on communities and the role of co-operatives, see Fairbairn, B. and Russell, N. (eds.), *Co-operative Canada: Empowering Communities and Sustainable Businesses*, Vancouver: UBC Press 2014.
- ¹³ International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). Definition of a co-operative. <http://ica.coop/en/what-co-operative>.
- ¹⁴ Brett Fairbairn, *Co-operative Development and the State: Case Studies and Analysis*, Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, 2000.
- ¹⁵ Fairbairn, 2000.
- ¹⁶ Fairbairn, 2000.
- ¹⁷ Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett, Michael Woolcock, "Escaping capability traps through Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)," WIDER Working Paper, No. 2012/64.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁹ The skill sets required for staff are extremely varied, and individuals on the project must be willing to change direction readily and work with minimal supervision while maintaining high levels of communication. Finding people with the right mix of skills and attitude for the project proved to be a challenge.
- ²⁰ There are well-documented concerns with the information presented in the 2011 census due to the replacement of the mandatory long-form census with a voluntary National Household Survey. This change creates problems in response rates in traditionally under-surveyed populations and in creating historical comparisons.
- ²¹ Credit Unions of Ontario, *Co-operative Communities Index*, <https://ws.onehub.com/files/85khjx3t>.