USING COOPS

🎯 OBJECTIVES

◄ Provide an opportunity for participants to actively apply both their needs assessment skills and cooperative solution testing skills

◄ Provide an opportunity for participants to gain group process skills by working in peer groups with the goal of reaching a point of agreement and completing a shared task

◄ Provide an opportunity for participants to being applying their knowledge and new skills to determine if and how a cooperative solution could be relevant to their own life or community

🕐 TIME

◄ **90 minutes:** This timing can vary according to how many groups you will need to have present at the close of the activity. Allow for as much small group work time as possible.

◄ **Add 15-20 minutes:** If beginning or ending your engagement with a group using this training, you will need to incorporate an opening and/or a closing session similar to those in "Beginning the Work" and "Bringing It All Together," respectively. Refer to those sections for tips on how to introduce and close workshops.

🗒 PREPARATION

SUPPLIES

◄ **Chart Paper**
◄ **Regular Markers**
◄ **Post-it Notes**

MATERIALS

◄ **Cooperative News Worksheet**
◄ **Cooperative News Scenarios**

POSTERS

◄ **Cooperative News Components (if not using worksheet)**

ADAPTATIONS

◄ **Audience:** Sample scenarios are provided for the Cooperative News activity in the Appendix. You can use them as presented or as a model to create your own. Adapting scenarios can make the situation more relatable or relevant. One tactic for creating scenarios is to use a playful, fictional scenari that doesn't directly relate to particpants' experiences or emotional responses (e.g. dinosaurs!). Having a fictional scenario is useful in two main ways:

1. you can address political or controversial concepts (e.g. discrimination, oppression) in a gentle way by using fantastical identities and characteristics that participants won't see themselves in and respond to personally , as well as

2. the activity can empower participants to use their imagination in the way a "real-life" example might not.

Another tactic is to use a known cooperative and make its origin story more generic by taking out all proper nouns or other identifiers (e.g. geography, industry, timeframe, etc.). Having a real-life example on which to base the scenario is helpful in two main ways:

1. it gives you an authentic response to skepticism or cynicism from participants that a cooperative solution is actually possible in a given scenario, and

2. it can demonstrate the flexibility of the cooperative model's application - as chances are that the solution a group imagines for the situation may be different from what actually happened in the real-life scenario. You can share all those iterations are valid and possible. *If you would like to focus on learning about flexibility, try having every group use the same scenario and seeing the different scenarios folks design.*

COOPERATIVE NEWS

In this activity, participants will work in small groups with a scenario that presents a need or challenge. They will seek to identify whether or not there is a cooperative solution. The intended cooperative solution is a *cooperative enterprise with a distinct membership and purpose*. Participants will be asked to both "make news" by designing the cooperative solution, as well as "report the news" from the perspective of the community's response to the cooperative solution. To do the reporting, the groups will create a "front page" of an online news outlet or local newspaper.

1. **FORM SMALL GROUPS:** Have participants break into one or more groups of five (or fewer) people.

    A. **DISTRIBUTE SCENARIO & WORKSHEET:** Give each group a scenario to explore – it is up to you if you'd like the groups to all use the same or different scenarios. *Sample scenarios are provided in the Appendix.*

2. **READ THROUGH SCENARIO & WORKSHEET:** Direct participants to read through their scenarios together. Then, have the group review the accompanying worksheet.

3. **FRAME:** Share that participants are to imagine themselves in that scenario, reflect on what their unique needs are in the situation, and consider whether or not a cooperative might be an appropriate tool for meeting their needs or addressing the challenge. Share that they will then be reporting from the perspective of a media outlet, but let the group know you will share more information for that after the making news portion is complete.

    A. **PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONS:** Direct the groups to dialogue around the why, who, and what of their potential cooperative solutions. Share that while discussing some of the more technical aspects of the work can be worthwhile, focusing on getting a strong narrative about the reasons behind and process of creating the cooperative will be most useful for the remainder of the activity. If using the worksheet, urge participants to use those prompts to guide their conversation.

    B. **ENCOURAGE RECORDING:** Instruct groups to take notes on their solutions so they don't lose any of their thinking when they move from the dicsussion portion to creating their news stories.

4. **RE-FRAME:** Once time has elapsed or all groups seem to be at a good transition point, share that the groups will now move on to reporting the news of the cooperative solution from the perspective of a media outlet.

    A. **PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONS:** Explain that each group is to create a website or newspaper "front page" (on a large sheet of paper) including an article covering their cooperative solution. On the provided paper, they will construct their front page using the Article Components (described on the worksheet or written up on a poster) and anything else they feel is appropriate.

    ## ARTICLE COMPONENTS

    ❑ **Headline:** A few words, often not a complete sentence, that serves as the title to the main front-page article.

    ❑ **Sidebars:** These are sub-statements, related to your cooperative scenario, that provide more detail than the headline. They include some of the technical and specific aspects of your discussion and subsequent plan, e.g. The new cooperative has already signed up 50 members!

    ❑ **Quotes:** These are testimonials about the accomplishment or difficulties encountered as shared by anyone imaginable.

    ❑ **Other:** Anything else you can think of that makes sense on a front-page, e.g. related articles with their own headlines, pictures, the weather, community announcements.

5. **ASSESS UNDERSTANDING:** It is important to ask for clarification needs at this point in the process, as the task is somewhat complex.

6. **BEGIN WORK:** Once you feel confident the groups understand the work ahead of them and feel equipped to complete it, let the groups begin drawing their cooperative news stories!

7. **BRING GROUP BACK TOGETHER:** After work time has elapsed, assess readiness and if folks need more time. Once groups are ready, have the group each identify a presenter and frame out the presentation format before they select.

    A. **PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONS:** To guide participants in presenting, clearly describe what should be included in the feedback and share the amount of time available for presenting their conclusions (e.g. "Present three of your front page components." "Take up to five minutes.").

8. **LEAD PRESENTATIONS:** Track time for each group and manage any questions for clarification that might come up with each presentation. Inform folks that there will be a general discussion following the presentations, so non-urgent commentary and inquiry will have a specific time.

9. **DISCUSS:** Once presentations are finished, ask if there are any observations or questions that participants would like to discuss. Engage the group as time allows.

UNDERSTANDING THE HOW

THis section allows participants some quiet reflection time to start thinking more deeply about what actions they would need to take in order to apply a cooperative solution to needs or challenges they or their community are facing. Journalling gets people looking inward, and subsequent discussion supports them in bringing their reflections and ideas into the open, which is an important step in moving from idea to action.

> 1. **ASK:** What is a need or challenge in your life or community?

    A. **PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask participants to respond to this question on one or more post-its (one need or challenge per post-it) and instruct each person to stick the post-it on an identified surface (e.g. front wall).

2. **REVIEW & ORGANIZE RESPONSES:** Have participants reivew the posted responses in a group. Encourage the reorganizing of post-its to indicate responses that are similar or related in some way.

    A. **READ RESPONSES OUTLOUD:** After the organizing has been completed, having the group go back to their seats and read outloud the individual responses and summarize the groupings.

2. **DISCUSS:** Lead the group in a discussion around the following prompts, but be sure not to limit the conversation -

> - Any patterns you notice or other observations you have about the collective needs/challenges?
> - What kinds of cooperative solutions could be applied to some of these individual or groups of similar needs or challenges?