



RETHINKING

MARKET STUDIES

Research Report

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**NATIONAL
BLACK FOOD
& JUSTICE
ALLIANCE**

National Black Food and Justice Alliance

Established in 2015, the National Black Food & Justice Alliance (NBFJA) is a coalition of Black-led organizations working towards cultivating and advancing Black leadership, building institutions for self-determination, and organizing for food sovereignty and land justice. NBFJA currently has over 50 member organizations representing hundreds of urban and rural farmers, organizers, and land stewards based throughout the U.S.. NBFJA members are building power through an intergenerational, urban/rural alliance of organizations that trains, connects and deepens grassroots efforts toward protecting Black land, advancing food sovereignty, and supporting a climate resilient future.

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Angela holds the position of CEO for the Little Africa Food Cooperative. She served as a mentor to the Food Systems Change Fellowship | Nourishing Power program facilitated by Case Western Reserve University. She advocates for local food systems and cooperatives lobbying within the Ag Noire Coalition and the National Cooperative Business Association. Angela's work with National Black Food & Justice Alliance Market Study Group Research Facilitator has produced a 40-page summary report on the topic of Rethinking Market Studies for Black led cooperatives. Most recently, Angela hosted the United Nations parallel event focused on Innovation and Technology in Land and Food Rights for Global African Women and Girls at the 67th Commission on the Status of Women.

For more information, please visit blackfoodjustice.org.

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Market Studies Research Project

The Market Studies Research Project is the continuation of many conversations within Black-led co-op spaces, most recently from a session at the 2022 Up & Coming Conference Black-led track. Participants discussed the need for culturally relevant market studies and principles that can aid Black co-ops in Black neighborhoods in obtaining funding. The current market study field is heavily reliant on data that diminishes the impact of Black spending and the demand for localized, community-operated food options in our communities. During the National Black Food & Justice Alliance June 2022 monthly co-op peer call, representatives from Black-led co-ops decided to initiate a project to challenge the existing anti-Black, capitalist standards around market research to make funding sustainable, Black-led co-ops more possible. The anticipated outcome of this project is to have a final product of culturally relevant market study principles, strategies, and recommendations to share with communities, cooperatives, funders, and stakeholders that will shift the power in funding Black-led cooperatives.

PROJECT GOALS

1. Understanding existing research practices within market studies work.
2. Collecting information from financial institutions about what they expect to see from a study.
 - » Which data and information matter most?
 - » What validates the data presented?
3. Developing research principles/market study guidelines that center Black community demographics incorporating qualitative data points.
4. Shifting financial institutions/philanthropic organizations towards financing more Black co-ops.
5. Developing a short-term and long-term strategy.
6. Identifying alternative funders and lending options.

OUR APPROACH

Through interviews and focus group discussions, **Black-led and Black-managed cooperatives** largely informed the research of this Market Studies Research Project.

We spoke with more than a dozen operators of cooperatives to gain insight into their experiences with market studies. Several of the members have participated in or have received market studies that, in their assessment, did not completely reflect some of the underlying variables that determine or at least impact the development of co-ops in under-served communities.

We also interviewed a dozen stakeholders including funders, researchers, and cooperators with market research study experiences. We engaged them in a different set of questions that were collectively formulated by the Market Study group to inform this study about their funding and financing processes, decision-making practices, and approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion specifically for Black-led cooperatives.

REPORT SECTIONS

Section One of the report will provide the interview questions and highlight the responses from our **cooperators**.

Section Two of the report will provide the interview questions and highlight responses from our **funders**.

Section Three will detail information that we have gathered on the **processes** of market research for grocery coops.

Section Four introduces **principles, insights, strategies, and recommendations** for transformative impact in this field.

| Black Cooperative Voice on Market Studies

Have you participated in a market study before?

The level of participation in market studies from our market study group was closely split among the participants with 55% responding “yes” and 45% responding “no” or “not yet.” However, of those responding “no,” more than 80% plan to have a market study done. In addition, other stakeholders that were interviewed also had experience with market studies and their contributions have been incorporated into this report.

Were the results of the market study what you expected?

There was an overwhelming consensus that data collection based solely on quantitative determinants misses the mark in assessing the needs of residents in Black communities. “Target areas” for example, are traditionally based on a geographic radius from a central point. This type of assessment is not equipped to measure if or how much further a potential customer is willing to travel because they want to support a Black-owned business. Similarly, consumers may want to shop where they “*feel more welcome*,” even if it means traveling a further distance. In both examples, the qualitative or emotional connection to a business or the role of that business in the community will have a direct impact on the data gleaned (or not) from simply looking at the traditionally accepted numbers.

In response to the question above, the cooperators responded “**yes**,” “**somewhat**,” and some had “**mixed**” expectations. Below are direct and paraphrased responses from our cooperators with **key points** highlighted in bold.

“

Yes. “We knew that there was a demand for a grocery store. We knew that was a high-traffic area. Evaluation of the trade area was good. The market, demographic and economic data was consistent with our knowledge of the area. We built the market study based on the square footage of the building that was already there.”

Yes. Good information that included all the grocery stores within a 10–20-mile radius and average spend data. However, **missing spending and buying power of Black communities** specifically and missing cultural components of what Black people buy and spend money on. If (culture was) mentioned, they will say it in a pejorative way, for example making reference to WIC.

”



“

Somewhat. *We expected an uphill battle, and the study reflected the need for us to be creative and innovative around the typical economic challenges.*

”

Yes. *We did have a hand in choosing the three sites with the three different square footages meaning the co-op participated at some level in the market research selection.*

“

Mixed. *The researcher looked at SNAP utilization and eligibility. The research uncovered a gap between people who are eligible for benefits and those who are receiving them. The measurement tool utilized was called the **Meal Deficit Metric. It measures the net missing meals on a community level.** The metric helped to illustrate the **unmet need for food security** that could be addressed.*

”

Mixed. *The results were mixed in terms of expectations. There were **assumptions built into the structure of the research** that impacted the results. For example, there was an assumption that the center of the store where the canned and packaged goods are shelved would be more successful. The reality was just the opposite. Fresh produce and fresh meats have been the most profitable sections of the store. They started with one butcher, now the co-op employs three. The **assumptions of the market study replicated the inequity that tends to exist in urban communities.** For example, the study suggested that population density in the area was an issue for us. The data showed that the area does not have enough people to support the store. People have been consistently coming to the co-op as a destination, meaning that they drive from beyond what is considered the target area.*

“

Mixed. *The results said that the cooperators shouldn't open a co-op. The researcher based the survey on other grocery stores, not other co-ops. With that comparison, the conclusion was that they wouldn't make any money. One of the sites has opened as a Latino market. There was a section that said that a smaller store would be more profitable. It would have been more useful if [the researcher] had done research on other co-ops in (our city). So... yes and no in terms of usefulness. Would be interested to see the difference between white co-ops market studies. I'd like to see more market data. **Haven't seen a market study that shows Black co-ops being successful.***



No, *not a fair study in America because Black Americans spend 1.3 trillion dollars every year and the study **should be based on our likes and preferences as Black America**. Our culture should have been part of the study; what we bring and what we know our people will buy into, plus everything else including the experience of shopping Black.*

“

Yes. *The co-op had informed the process based on surveys done by the co-op, so the researcher was able to look for some of the things that had already been documented giving a base of information for that neighborhood to validate. [The co-op] was assertive about their approach and the study helped to articulate [the research findings] to larger investors and to the members..*

Yes, *results looked exactly like a prior co-op down the road. It seemed like they used the same study. However, the actual sales of the co-op were almost double that of the forecasted sales, so **the study was not particularly accurate in the results**. (Note: This co-op is not Black-led.)*

“

Yes. *They went into the process with a **better understanding from previous market studies** of what to expect and the results better-reflected expectations but not entirely.*

Yes. *Market study experience was not in food co-op space but in the Black community with different ongoing data collection efforts [for other Black serving organizations] ongoing for the past 20 years.*

“

Mixed. *The board did not trust the market study and thought it was based on a lot of racist assumptions. They did a market study refresh giving them more information about the community. The process was **not totally transparent**, and the researcher displayed inherent bias during discussions.*

What could have been different about the process?

Many insights are lifted in the responses to this question. These new documented ideas will support future success in the design of market studies.

Research is missing the “Ms. Suzie” (referring to the legacy and Indigenous wisdom of Black women) know-how, excluding the knowledge of the residents and neighbors in the community. Research should **give credibility to those that live here in the community**.

Research should include **critical race analysis and impacts**, considering what impacts purchasing and what is in the design of grocery stores. For example, the loss of a grocery store is seen as a failed business without carefully assessing the drivers and impacts.

Research does not consider **social determinants other than economics**. It misses health crises of racism, access to transportation, environmental conditions, and other important factors.

Researchers should facilitate group learning and **education on the market study results**, key performance indicators, how to use the market study for business development, and sharing key learnings with the cooperators and community.

Research methods lack transparency. The comparisons of the trade area to other trade areas in the market analyst database, based on the economic profile of the neighborhood, were opaque. Yet it was unknown what the trade areas were in the comparisons making **the process a little mysterious**. The co-op did not know what they were being compared against due to a proprietary database.

“Research is about capital and not about feeding people.”

The **underlying assumptions matter**. Researchers should not allow their presumptions of underdevelopment in the area to affect their expectations. “to “Researchers with inherent assumptions of communities that are underdeveloped tend to be reflected and impact the outcomes of the market study Because the co-op is in a mixed-market neighborhood, assumptions about the buying habits of low-income residents can easily skew data and analysis. Our cooperator believes firmly that “in the process of collecting data, the systems of analysis matter.”

Research should **consider culture**. The study should include culture in the feasibility analysis. Considering the culture means discovering how we make money, what else do we add to our experience besides the grocery store, and what would the people be interested in seeing in the grocery store? For example, the community wants to see our signs and images in the grocery aisles, highlighting us and our greatness; with murals on the wall as a draw to the shopping experience; hosting creative days like poetry day to bring people in; and making healthy food and eating look sexy, attractive, and trendy.

Research should engage more co-ops for information sharing in this space to learn from those that already have been doing it. **More cooperation** with focus groups on ways that people spend as a method for primary research and data collection.

Researchers are needed that can **document the “underground” economy** of community-based transactions that may not necessarily be reflected in sales receipts.

CRITERIA FOR MARKET RESEARCHERS

What search criteria are you using to field market researchers?

In general, it was suggested that a level of sensitivity to the day-to-day realities that many operators and customers experience would be beneficial to the collection and analysis of market research data. Resolving issues of trust for example are key to getting people to open up about their information. Researchers need to understand that many people in Black communities share a level of apprehension that information obtained by “outsiders” may ultimately be used against their businesses, community, or even them personally.

The *two overarching points of consensus* on preferred search criteria are 1) **researchers should be from the culture, be culturally competent, emotionally intelligent, and culturally proficient** and 2) **researchers should have experience-based backgrounds** that include challenges, struggles, and issues faced in the Black community food space. Below are more direct, detailed responses to the criteria for field market researchers.

Experience-based Background

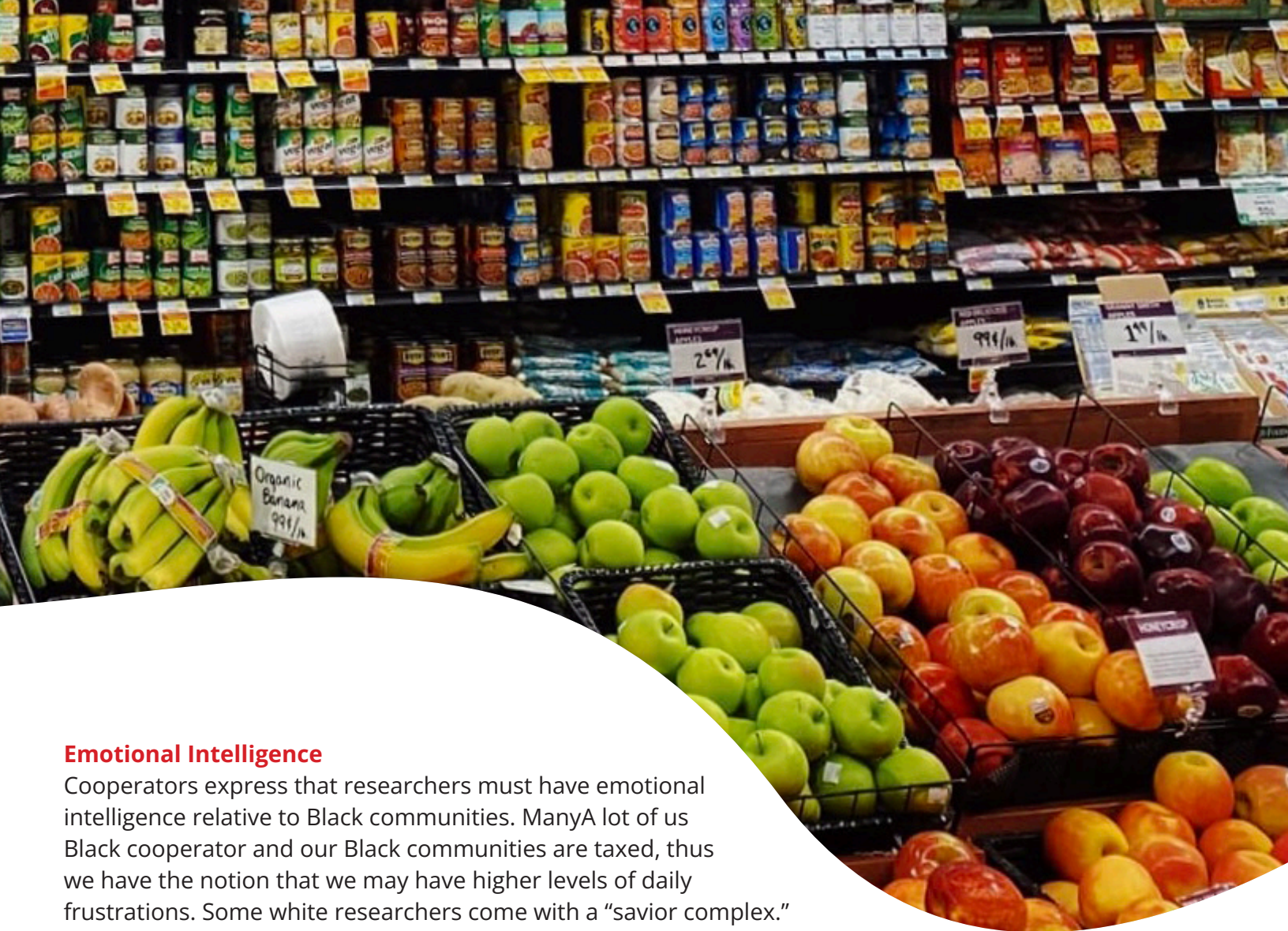
Cooperators have preference for someone of African descent, that is in the movement of empowering our people. It is important that the researcher is knowledgeable and familiar with our hardships and understands our plight. Cooperators have a preferred criterion for someone that has first-hand experience with Black people in the food space, going through similar challenges and losses, and with an interest in making sure that our losses are minimized and ultimately eliminated..

Culturally Competent

Cooperators have a strong view that someone with a deep understanding of cultural relevance and and cultural competency, cultural proficiency and a liberatory perspective are necessary characteristics for a research team.

Researchers need to be able to uncover the depth and layers of dynamics unique to Black communities and researchers must interact with the people that the co-op is looking to serve. Researchers should have a core value of understanding the struggle that continuously exists in our work and has the ability to create a culturally responsible study that is engaging..





Emotional Intelligence

Cooperators express that researchers must have emotional intelligence relative to Black communities. Many a lot of us Black cooperator and our Black communities are taxed, thus we have the notion that we may have higher levels of daily frustrations. Some white researchers come with a “savior complex.” Therefore, self-awareness is needed. We need researchers who are local and can look past the numbers, and are consciously aware of the condition of the community with the ability to communicate straight from the grassroots the purpose of this research for. Emotional intelligence requires that they are aware of their inherent bias and the impact of that bias on the underlying assumptions made behind the data.

Cooperators are fielding researchers who have a financial and marketing background, know how to navigate focus groups, and understand the demographics, goals and work that we do are vital criteria.

Further, cooperators want to know if the researcher is connected to the funder. “It matters because you have to follow the money. The results will benefit whoever is paying for them.”

CULTURAL RELEVANCY INSIGHTS FOR MARKET STUDIES

How do you see market studies moving forward in the future to be more culturally relevant?

One of our cooperators said he sees the work of the NBFJA as “a really good start.” He sees “asking people, compensating and convening people” as necessary components to acquiring culturally relevant data. He is of the opinion that bringing people together and having a process for approaching larger institutions, especially as it relates to opening up access to capital, is necessary for this work to thrive. He also sees a need to shift our collective perspective from “doing more with less, to doing more with more.”

Cultural relevance is at the heart of this issue for our co-ops. Specific themes emerged from the responses of our cooperators that appear as topic headings. These themes are foundational to this initial phase of our project and will be used as principal cornerstones as we build on them moving forward.

Customer Experience

Currently, market studies do not include voices of people who are directly impacted especially in neighborhoods where people do not currently have a grocery store. There is a need to have more involvement at the local level and also have the voice of the community better reflected. There should be more qualitative questions about the “whys” regarding travel times and not accessing closer stores. Why are they (customers) taking two buses across town? They did not feel comfortable using food assistance cards at certain grocery store locations. The **customer experience is not really assessed**. Researchers must come to the site for physical visits and include data from residents that live in the community.

Tastes and Preferences

Studies should answer the question of how we can collect data on specific products that people want. They could have **looked more closely at the composition of the food that is carried** in the store. The studies should include potential inventory data such as type of departments e.g., deli, prepared foods, bakery. Our grocery co-ops want an inventory that is specific to our geographic location and the **Black diaspora tastes and preferences** carrying culturally specific foods such as yams, callaloo, collard greens, or pig ears. Also taking it one step further to show more than just the right items, but also in the right place and position.

Environmental Justice and Policy Advocacy

The studies should **assess environmental justice factors** such as how railroads isolate the community, and environmental and other safety hazards in the community. The studies can be used to stand up at the city councils to bring on change and help people to secure the land and properties they want and be used as a powerful tool to stop gentrification.

Supplemental Programs and Services

The consideration of **other programs or services that are not being offered at grocery stores** that can be offered at the co-op should be included. For example, residents need access to medicine so one co-op has decided to put a pharmacy in their store. The question of costs associated with additional products, programs, or services should be considered in the study. This will help inform community engagement efforts, especially for those co-ops using a Community Development Model.

Black Worldview and Culture

Market studies reinforce Black redlining, this tool should do just the opposite. The studies should have a **strong reflection of our own culture** including the aesthetic design, the products, and the marketing flavor. The co-op should feel like a place that is ours for Black people. We want it to feel like a Black grocery store to attract people interested in this atmosphere and develop the type of loyalty associated with our culture. **Black expertise in Black culture is needed for studies.** A culturally competent researcher would know what to ask and how to formulate from the culture. Market studies should produce real results with flavor highlighting our style as different from other co-ops. The study should be more specialized versus just the statistical data.

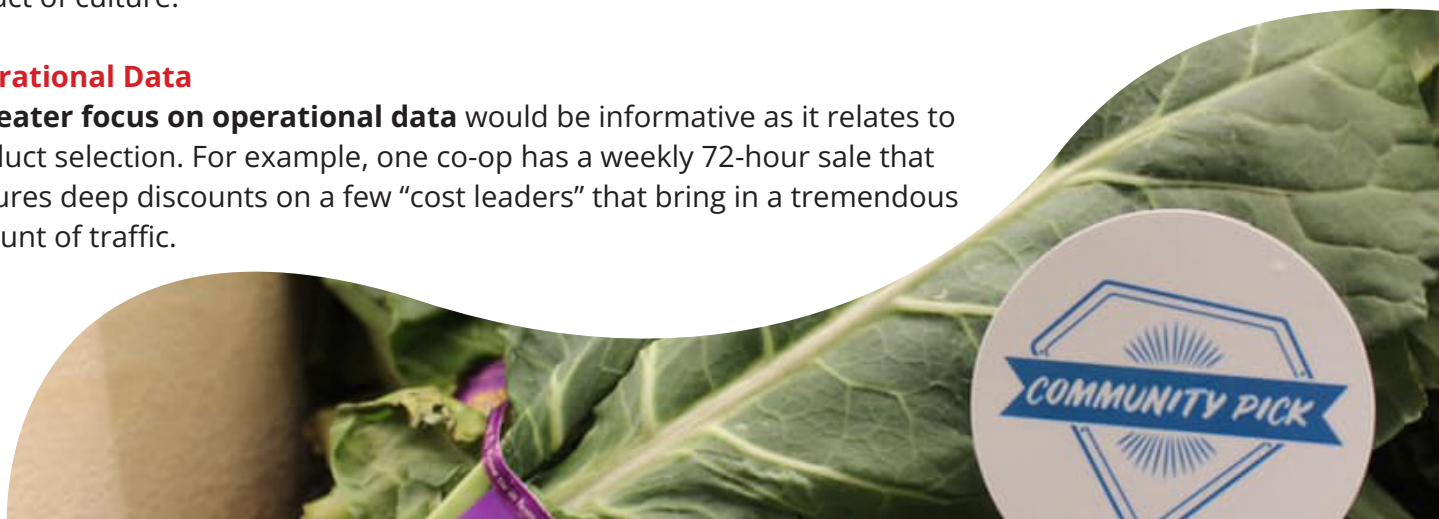
The market study model must reflect our worldview. The market study factors heavily in the financing to help determine if the overall business is economically viable. It's an essential part of the decision-making process. More culturally relevant data can help lenders make more favorable funding decisions. We expect the data to show there is money in the Black community and reflect the voice of the city to control our own local food system.

Co-op Involvement and Contributions

When choosing the comparative trade areas, it **makes sense for the co-ops to be involved on some level.** Since there are no co-ops, we can help analysts find relevant comparatives. Perhaps look at other ethnic stores in low-income communities for data comparison and analysis on the impact of culture.

Operational Data

A **greater focus on operational data** would be informative as it relates to product selection. For example, one co-op has a weekly 72-hour sale that features deep discounts on a few "cost leaders" that bring in a tremendous amount of traffic.



Mission vs. Margins

It would be helpful to make **mission vs. margins** part of the regular conversation. We held considerable conversation around the operation of existing corner stores in urban areas. These stores tend to have relatively small geographic footprints. They also tend to be profitable, primarily on the sale of alcohol and tobacco. Many of the operators interviewed shared their experience in grappling with the decision to sell these products or not. The **ethical and moral considerations were measured against the economic viability** and, somewhat surprisingly, there was no strong “yes or no” either way. It remains, however, an important question to consider especially when weighed against “the greater good.” Even with that, who determines “the greater good” was also up for debate. It was pointed out that well-intentioned operators could easily slip into a “we know what’s best for you” position that is often associated with others that are perceived to be doing harm in Black communities.

Owning Our Data

While many of the conversations focused on the need for sensitivity and experience in working within Black communities, there was also considerable conversation about the need to “generate our own data.” A few of the respondents specifically raised the issue of creating an infrastructure for collecting data. Multiple operators shared the question “how can we collect data on specific products that people want?” Ideas to do this centered on more specific onsite surveys. Another suggestion was the use of technology, either existing or to be created, that could collect data on-site in real-time. This information would be invaluable for operators to select appropriate products and to establish price points that are sustainable for customers and for the co-ops.

If we **own it, we can shape the data**. One thing about research is that you get extra information. You get an idea about whatever is being considered. It helps to fine-tune the data so we can fine-tune the questioning as we go along.

**“Market studies
are being used for
gentrification.”**

Success is More than Margins

There is so much more to figuring out the probability of success than profit margin. Who gets to decide? Currently, the decisions are driven by capitalist structures. A co-op can exist having really bad principles and values with a hyperfocus on profit margins. There is no cultural relevance in that unless we’re trying to build racist and white supremacist capitalist structures. It’s not all about the projections. Studies should include and **emphasize worker and member well-being** as a measure of success. The quality of the job should be just as important as the money brought in.

Black Food Narratives

Many of the conversations were focused on **our collective relationship with food** and with the food system. The idea of “healthy eating as a luxury” was raised as was the opportunity to better **market healthy food** in our communities. From a research perspective, these concepts were suggested as avenues for developing potential partnerships with healthcare entities. “Social determinants of health” were specifically mentioned as data points that could be included in the assessment of market potential. These partnerships could serve the dual role of increasing the fundability of community-based projects as they help to collect more relevant data about the impact of healthier eating.

The study should show that **we go all out for food** and shift the narrative toward sovereignty. Black cooperators formulating narratives and marketing around good food and healthy eating as a luxury.

Make a New Template and a New Tool

Make a new template. The current yardstick doesn’t measure. Somebody has to figure out how to measure something more effective and relevant. It’s a miracle that any Black co-ops can open if funding is based on whiteness and income. The **current market study tools do not correlate well with Black communities**. They don’t know if there will be a sustainable amount of revenue because market study companies are not good at measuring how loyal the community will be to our co-op.

“It would be great to have a framework for what a market study should have in it. Breaking down the nuts and bolts of what the data is.”

The tools are old. There needs to be a different way in which we do groceries. Market studies are lagging because measurements are based on historical data, what has happened versus what will happen. New tools should address the gap in historical data collection methods and **shift to future metrics** of where we are going; both quantitatively and qualitatively and tracking the outcomes with a new tool.

Education on Market Research Data

The more co-op managers and operators understand data, the more they can participate in directing the research approach. Education from those that look, sound, and talk like the members should be part of the business model. Cooperators would love to see us have a better understanding of what these tools can do to understand how to use them more effectively. They want to be able to communicate business objectives more clearly to the community and owners toward building the business. Our cooperator believes that “we all have the opportunity to learn,” and wants the findings of the study to be communicated back to the community when complete.

Perspective and Practices from Funders and Other Stakeholders

The themes for this section breakdown into racial equity principles and practices, the importance of market studies to funding decisions, funding decision assessment, technical assistance, and advice for successful Black-led co-ops.

RACIAL EQUITY

Does your organization have a cultural diversity department?

100% of our respondents answered no, there is not a cultural diversity department. Most of them have small staffs of 11 or fewer people. However, several respondents shared that there are committees within their boards or organizations that address racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.

What is the racial / ethnic makeup of your organization's staff in regard to who's making the funding decisions?

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Respondent 1 | Staff is 100% white. Board has 11 members; 4 are Black, one is Asian, and one Peruvian. |
| Respondent 2 | Board has 7 members; one queer woman of color and 3 people of color. |
| Respondent 3 | Staff has 4 Black women. |
| Respondent 4 | Staff has 11 members: 40% people of color and one Black
Loan Committee (funding decision makers) has 11 members; 5 people of color and 4 Black. |



Respondent 5
(representing two organizations)

- » Funding decision under 30K, exclusively approved by Black CEO.
- » Funding decision above 30k goes to credit committee comprised of 5 members: 2 white, 3 non-white.
- » Funding decisions made over a certain amount made by CEO and staff deputy director; both are white.
- » Funding decision over a certain amount goes to a loan committee comprised of 10 board members; 2 are Black.

Respondent 6

Governance Committee (funding decision makers) is 100% Black
Governing Fund Committee has majority people of color.

Respondent 7

Board has 9 members; 5 are minorities including one Black women, 4 other women, and 4 are white men.

Respondent 8


Staff has 6 members; one white and 5 Black.
Board has 3 Black officers; 2 BIPOC South Asian; one white.

Respondent 9

Three owners; 2 white and one Black woman.

What is your organization's commitment to racial equity? Is there a formal equity position statement?

This question was asked to interviewers of 8 organizations; only 2 had an actual position statement on racial equity. One respondent indicated that the formal equity statement is being worked on. Another respondent says the organization has revamped its mission statement and organizational goals to call out the work they do related to racial equity. Another mentioned the organization's focus of support to historically oppressed communities. Another respondent has adopted a racial equity pledge.



In general, conversations and small steps are happening, but more can be done to formalize equity position statements. In many instances, there are individuals with organizations that are concerned about racial equity and they themselves seem to be the person taking on the role of addressing racial equity commitments within those organizations.

Does your organization recognize or acknowledge the historic lack of support of Black-led initiatives?

Most respondents answered yes. Some with their staff and boards just recently coming into alignment around the historical and structural inequities. One organization says it happens often in conversations about the work, in planning, and on the board.

They also see the lack of support of Black-led initiatives play out informally in that White co-ops have more friends and family support at the startup stage. Many Black or other co-op operators with less economic resources do not have time to participate in the building of the co-op, particularly for free. To make it more affordable, one **funder created a stipend program for the early cooperators** to support people of color needing financial support to participate. Another funding organization acknowledges it but there is more work to be done and suggests that a level of education needs to happen within the organization, but notes that they are looking for Black-led co-ops to work with. One organization has a conference for BIPOC farmer co-ops that had run for 5 years and was disrupted due to covid but hopes to restart the program within the next one to two years.



What kind of relationships are being built in your organization's community or service areas that promote racial equity?

One respondent stated that the relationship with the National Black Food & Justice Alliance has helped to move things toward equity. Another respondent mentioned connecting with the Network for Developing Conscious Communities recently and in the past working with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. Another responded that this space is large, and they are trying to expand the territory and get out into more of the community besides the general “co-op” ways. They are working on not being so siloed outside of the organization.

It is critical to build trust based relationships with Black-led organizations and support the work we are doing to promote racial equity.

MARKET STUDIES

Does your organization use market studies as a requirement for funding eligibility? What criteria for funding from your organizations is based on market studies?

- » Funding organizations do use market studies at some level in reviewing eligibility and readiness and some do not. These levels vary as reflected in the responses.
- » One founder stated that market studies are one of the pieces they expect the co-op to have but it is not used as a decision-making criterion.
- » Market studies serve as a cue to funders to understand the liability or successes from the investment and readiness of the co-op to start capitalization of the project.
- » Market studies are 100% important to funding decisions in addition to the capital campaign; direct preferred shared investments were mentioned as a funding construct.
- » The level of importance of the market study depends on the type of funding sought after; for example, private vs. public funds, funding from lending circles, or local CDFI organizations. Some funders are more understanding of the cooperative movement, and some are more traditional. Some funders require a market study coupled with a *confident proforma*.
- » Some require a business plan which will contain a clear understanding of the market; therefore, a separate market study is not necessarily needed.
- » Funder intermediaries are also at times part of the process. They review, interpret, advocate, and have some level of influence on funders.
- » Two of the organizations responded “no” that market studies are not used as requirements and these organizations are co-op funding organizations.

How does your organization validate market studies?

Only one response confirmed any market study validation activities. Their method is to analyze and ask probing questions and talk through the results of the study.

The others do not have a mechanism nor formal validation process for validating the studies. At the most, they will ask clarifying questions and may also solicit some insights from the local community. There is an obvious gap pertaining to qualitative data validation.

Has your organization focused on updating any existing market studies in the context of racial equity?

Organizations that serve as matchmakers do not necessarily require or have a specific focus on market studies. They offer technical assistance which is detailed further in this report. The other responses indicated an overall no or not applicable to this question.

9. Does your organization have an equity fund?

- » Four of the funding organizations responded “yes” they do have an equity fund and one responded no.
- » Yes, less than one million in the Equitable Economy Fund. The funds range from 30-50k for graduates of their program with a prioritization on entrepreneurs of color. They have a goal of getting more funding for the graduates. The funds are loan funds and debt financing.
- » They maintain a list of funders that focus on diverse co-ops and have an interest in solving the racial wealth gap.
- » Yes, the organization has a collateral pool, but the interviewee was unable to identify who the funding is for.
- » Yes, some grant dollars to support early-stage startups allocating 25% of the overall portfolio.
- » Yes, must be a member of their co-op organization yet difficult to fund with no financial history.
- » No but they provide microloans.

10. Does your organization fund cooperatives?

Five of the respondents do fund cooperatives. Some give grant awards while others offer finance via loans and some equity investments. Another respondent used to give seed grants but stopped 5 years ago.

11. How many Black-led co-ops has your organization funded?

Based on our interviews, the Collective Courage Fund leads the funding community with funding for 10 Black-led co-ops over 2 years. Of those funded, 6 are grocery co-ops, one real estate co-op, and one food and land co-op. Another organization in the eastern region funds throughout and posts their program. In 2020 and 2021, they cited that 45-50% of funding went to Black-led co-ops; in 2022 it was lower. These co-ops are not grocery co-ops. Another funder shared what most Black cooperators already know; that whiteness is the norm of the co-op space. They have 5 food co-ops in their membership but none are Black-led co-ops.

12. What type of grocery or other experience does your organization look for on a cooperative board or management team?

- » For co-op loan funds, there is not a specific grocery experience requirement. For co-op startups, experience in grocery is usually non-existent, so it is not an explicit requirement.
- » They generally consider the experience of the management team but can't speak specifically to grocery store co-ops. A team must be able to demonstrate their ability to execute the plan. Prior relevant experience can be a good indicator that strengthens consideration.
- » Management-level team expertise in the grocery industry is necessary. General manager needs supervisory and team management skills.
- » Board level is not always a priority for some. For others, board members must be rooted in the community and able to put in a significant amount of time.

13. What level of membership does your organization look for in cooperatives to support?

- » There is not a specific number of members. We look for their membership level to reflect validation from their community. The more that customer validation can be demonstrated, the better.
- » They look for **validation from the community** and market validation is very important.
- » Need to be a worker-owned co-op or a mission-oriented nonprofit with value alignment; minimum membership level is not a requirement.
- » The requirement is 600 -1000 members.
- » The stage of development matters and what the co-op is securing funds for; at some point, it shifts. The number of members demonstrates the level of commitment and funders want to see that there is a base. **Most co-ops are under-resourced, and investment is needed in those leading the projects to organize.** This is a significant gap, particularly in Black communities.

14. What type of collateral does your organization look for?

- » Collateral is not part of the core valuation. It is about cash flow and not minimum requirements. Funder will take lien on accounts receivables and equipment via Uniform Commercial Code filing if needed.
- » Not necessarily required but many applicants do have collateral such as equipment.
- » There is a collateral requirement, but details were not available for the type of collateral.
- » Some form of asset liquidity and the personal guarantee of any liability is required thus the reason why capitalization is important. Traditional strategy is to get a certain amount of money raised but this is not so effective for Black co-ops.

15. What types of creative forms of collateral have or would your organization consider?

One funder is **open to a collateral pool** that will allow loans to be made to businesses that do not have traditional collateral. They would be willing to consider it and very much open to try things out. Since collateral is not a requirement for most of the funders, this question did not largely apply.

16. Is your organization willing to serve as a pass-through for Federal dollars?

It is work that could be taken on, but they are extremely cautious about it because they do not want to be in the space where Black-led organizations should be in charge, so it has not been pursued. Both are small operationally so it would be difficult and put serious strain on their capacity. It requires a lot of resources to get and stay on top of federal funds. They are a 501c3 and act as a fiscal sponsor now.

Yes, there are opportunities even if we, the Alliance, are prime and they are subcontractors.

They receive federal money via a fiscal sponsor, but they have experience.

17. What is your organization's process for risk assessment?

One funder assesses risk in the beginning and has a monitoring and evaluation team. They have metrics to assess performance and they do site visits. Another has a risk rating system that looks at operating history, current market, and quantitative processes but it has limitations. They are looking for other tools to measure.

18. Are there any ways that your organization is looking to shift their funding to more equitable and non-extractive funding?

No, there are no non-extractive funding sources that exist in our capitalistic system; non-extractive is not compatible in our system based on prohibitive funding restrictions. However, they are looking at going to private sources of funding to offer more flexibility within their organization. One organization mentioned they are trying to get Small Business Administration to direct funds that would waive the personal guarantee which would result in more fund access.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

19. Does your organization offer technical assistance to support applicants in meeting the funding requirements?

- » All of our stakeholders offer technical assistance for co-ops. Here is a list of programs and services offered by our funders, intermediaries, and other cooperators.
- » Peer-led groups.
- » Strategic retreats for strategic planning with advisors.
- » Coaching and connection preparation with loan funders early in the process doing pitch sessions and properly formatted, solid business plans that tell the co-op story with supporting financials.
- » Monthly mass meeting with teams.
- » Open coaching calls for entrepreneurs.
- » Make links to external assistance for program alumni.
- » Assistance with the application process.
- » Teach co-ops how to get people interested.
- » Walk through the incorporation process.
- » Provide access to an accountant, attorney, banker, or other resource providers locally and nationally.
- » Work through bylaws, membership agreements, and membership drives.
- » Assist with USDA certification to collect and sell qualified products.





- » Leadership coaching and guidance.
- » Research and strategic planning.
- » Brand identity development.
- » Specific types of systems development.
- » Education, training, and technical support to startup cooperatives.
- » Connections to obtain funding at the end of the program.
- » Assistance with procurement process.
- » Writing assistance and strengthening with USDA approval process.
- » Grant support for 501c3 organizations.
- » Capacity building support for technical assistance.
- » Preferred vendor list for co-op support services.
- » Funding for a market study, business feasibility, and financial literacy.
- » Provide letters of support.



ADVICE AND INSIGHTS FOR BLACK-LED CO-OPS

20. How would you advise co-ops toward success?

Our study asked cooperative stakeholders including funders their wisdom or perspective on what Black co-ops need to do to be successful.

During the course of this research project, this statement was noted: “No Black co-op has met the sales projections” and several co-ops were named, both currently operational and failed co-ops. **It is easier to get it open than to make it sustainable.**

In solidarity economy building, work is relational. This requires supporting individuals and groups that work together. Groups that share leadership, navigate conflict, and share power and space with each other are the strongest. **Groups that rotate throughout spaces build more equitable structures.** Otherwise, the Black-led co-op will just be a business but miss out on the people aspect of cooperation. Investing in people, managing relationships, and running enterprises are all necessary components for success. However, some more established co-ops choose the enterprise over the people. They may achieve business success but tend to resemble traditional business models. **Cooperative success will always have to come back to the people.**

*Imagine what could come from more innovative ways of doing this **principle of cooperation** such as sharing an employee, sharing some back-end costs, and sharing money. Imagine how we can work together with the ability to brand in a new good way; making worlds of possibility even though the world outside is cruel.*

Fund at least one to two full-time people to get the co-op going. People are doing the co-op plus a multitude of other things; money is needed and having staff early in the process whose sole responsibility is to get the business up and running will increase the likelihood of success. Raising the sense of urgency with reality. Focusing on what needs to be learned or done while thinking of ways for the **timeline to be shortened** so that co-ops can be opened within 4-5 years and not a decade. Developing what is the **compelling argument for “friendly funders”** to say what we need is staff and we’re trying to find an answer NOW.

Create a self-subsidizing community moving toward economic equality. Find a way to enable access for those that are economically challenged to be subsidized by the wealthier consumers. Optimize the economic diversity. One co-op for instance offers chicken thighs, rice, and beans to appeal to low-income consumers while also offering premium, fancy cheeses to higher-income consumers. This combination allows them to serve the whole community. They also provide needs-based discounts, do round-up programs, and focus on local products.

“JUST COOPERATE”

Create positive loyalty by investing in your staff and making the co-op workplace great for them and their **greatness will show up** in the operation of the co-op.

Ensure that the co-op is representative of the entire community and be mindful that geographic location matters so be in the know about the development plans in your city.

21. What would you like to see come out of this process? How will this work be impactful to you?

Knowing that we're not just sitting back and allowing people to exploit us but there is a national organization of community members that are connected and **asserting self-determination**.

Use this as a strategic tool for people who have power and influence to know this is **relevant and powerful**.

Understand **how to use market studies** and know what banks and investors want to see so that co-ops are being more critical during the information gathering and knowing what data elements are central to the profitability.

The ultimate dream is for Black providers to do the work in the food co-op world.

Understanding the current processes and methodologies; then **developing new approaches** for market study research.

Coalesce into an ecosystem that gets funding from the very beginning; from idea phase to check and knowing multiple organizations can help along the way that talk to each other and see more money being put into Black hands for support of Black businesses.

Want to see the variables, identifiers, and **distinct things** that are different in our community and how we are going to understand these things qualitatively and quantitatively.

“Like ships passing in the night.”

It would help for the researcher to be in the community that is organizing and have some understanding of the issues that are in that community. At a more minute level, **understanding what lies underneath the surface**, why the issues exist, and how they got there in addition to the quantitative data.

Reduce the struggle to get criteria such as health determinants and community-owned infrastructure with a **focus on community-based solutions** with a list of people that will buy; selling at marketplace; ways to demonstrate that we can do it.

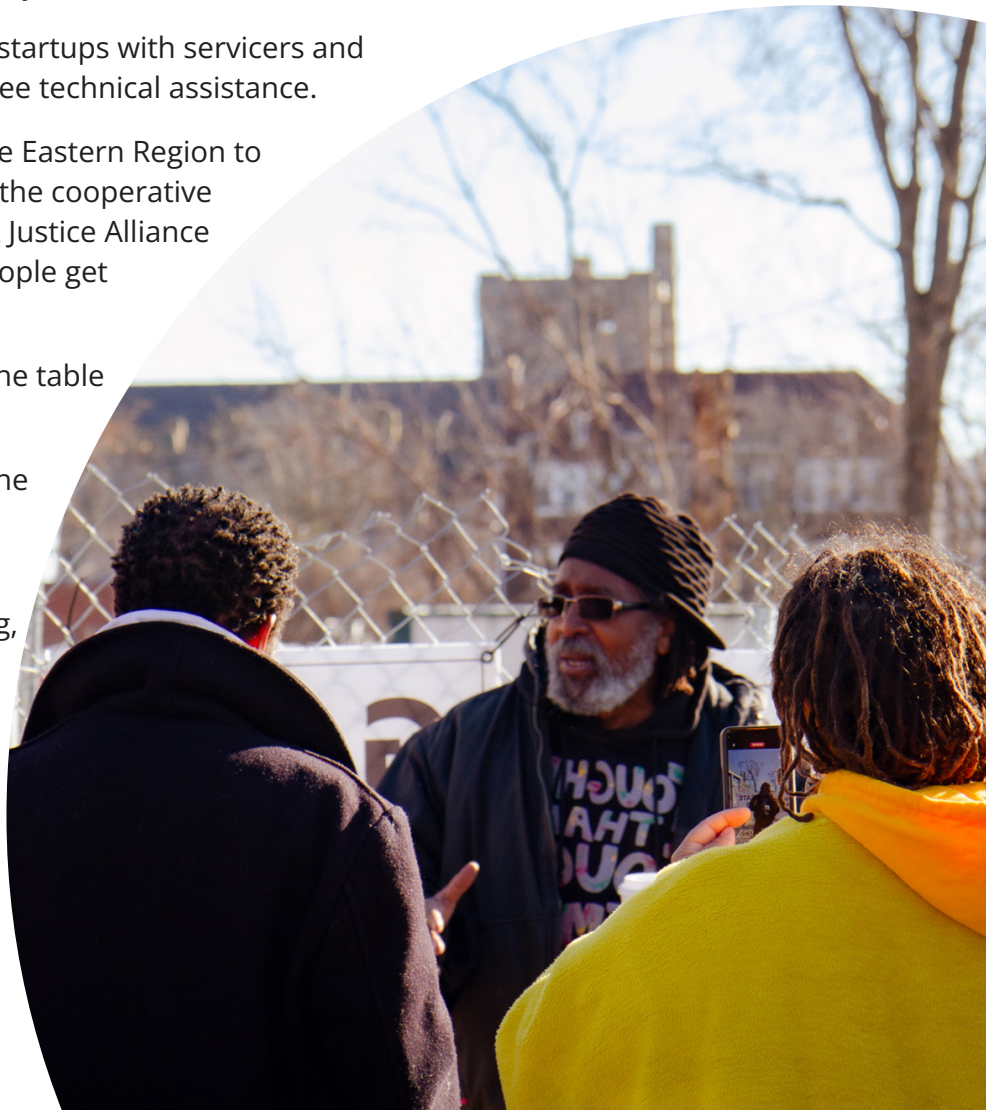
Access to the big databases.

New idea evolution. Excited because I don't know what this thing will look like; the brilliant ideas that will come out of this; what's being said, moved, and thought about differently than what has been said before.

An **emerging model** from this effort that funders can buy into, like a proof of concept. Once we can show one or two where it has worked well, others will follow.

22. How can NBFJA assist your efforts to fund / invest more in Black-owned and operated cooperatives?

- » Help to identify who is doing the work for us outside of the ivory towers that are looking with a lens of abundance versus the old scarcity mindset.
- » Utilize data collection as a tool to unlock capital.
- » Develop or identify tools for the long haul in response to tough markets, tight margins, and supply chains.
- » Pool grant dollars for a funding pool to work with as a tool to allow us to take a smart risk with no guarantees versus the guaranteed dollars that must be repaid.
- » Love to collaborate.
- » Invite team to have a conversation with the Black co-ops matter initiative; bring more people into the room. We could potentially partner around the initiative. A physical convening space has been imagined and envisioned to get more Black people into co-ops for networking and support.
- » Bringing visibility to our (Black-Led Co-op) network and identify who can be brought in to get the opportunities e.g., USDA opportunity.
- » Connect interested cooperatives startups with servicers and disseminate information about free technical assistance.
- » Need more co-op education in the Eastern Region to explain the benefits and value of the cooperative model; the National Black Food & Justice Alliance could hold workshops on how people get involved in the co-op model.
- » Important that the Alliance is at the table with CCF.
- » Important that the Alliance is at the table with FCI Up and Coming
- » The Alliance is centered at uncovering the narratives, leading, and organizing, being aware of who to network with to develop appropriate relationships with mainstream funders.
- » To train General Managers.
- » Through leadership, things like this are important, broadening and putting resources into answering questions.



Market Study Research Process

THE GOAL

The main goal of most cooperative market research is to **arrive at the pro forma (financial projections) analysis** which is a key requirement for most institutional investors in funding decisions.

THE PROCESS

Gathering local industry-specific information.	Evaluation of site to determine the right size for sales potential location.	Define trade area then match to census tract; then match with existing co-ops.	Calculate the sales projections utilizing analog forecasting processes versus the gravity model.
Location, parking, visibility of store, general area, and general characteristics.	Visit food store competitors.		Data points are address and sales amount.
Data collection of GIS research area, demographics, competitors, and analysis of current store.	Meet with a co-op planning group.		Get sales performance data by census tract.
Spliced data together that became a map with hot zones and cold zones.			
Gather some qualitative input from the co-op.			

DEEPER DIVE QUESTIONS FROM RESEARCHER

What looks different between Black-led co-ops vs white co-ops?

- » Researchers cited that the Black-led co-ops are not yet open so they cannot be compared.
- » Challenge of running into “paywalls” when needing to access data.

Have you done research for other ethnic stores?

No, only anecdotal.

What data sources are used for market research?

- » Databases used are from natural food co-ops, conventional food co-ops, and some mixed grocery co-ops.
- » Data extracted includes sales performance based on educational and income levels and white-collar jobs.
- » Data also collected in conjunction with 700 interviews.

How do you determine product mix?

Natural foods cannot be afforded in lower-income neighborhoods.

What is the difference between traditional grocery and co-op grocery?

- » Co-ops and independent grocery stores are in similar category.
- » Customers are different.
- » Sales performances are different.

What has been the accuracy of sales projections for new startups, existing store expansions, or relocation to a new facility?

- » For existing stores, usually within 5-10%.
- » For new start-ups, usually around 15%.
- » Note that issues with the data may arise when a competitor opens in the market

How is data sourced when there is no store in the area?

The researcher breaks the data segments down to the census tract using a proprietary database and the disaggregate methodology which matches demographic characteristics from one census tract to another.

What are the common challenges and common successes?

The process of increasing education around the impact and mechanics of market studies is greatly needed for co-ops. The challenge for co-ops understanding industry competition can be improved for those doing market studies by using preliminary market assessments as an educational tool.

What can co-ops do in preparation for the market study?

Do pro forma analysis first to help know what they can afford to finance and have at least 300 members. Have funding of approximately \$11K to afford the service.

Are there other forms of community engagement?

There is not a lot of info from surveys that is helpful to market studies; however, the location of members does not hold weight. Every store should get receipts from their community to inform product mix and affordable prices.

Principles, Insights, Strategies and Recommendations

“We cooperate on the fringe of the mainstream but within the mainstream.”

PRINCIPLES

- » There was discussion as to how this work relates back to **historical cooperative models**. Co-ops have been directly associated with political and economic advancement throughout the post-slavery history of Black people in America. A better understanding of how these co-ops worked and continue to work was recognized as **fundamental knowledge** for planners, researchers, and operators of future cooperative endeavors.
- » **Education** from those that look, sound, and talk like the members should be part of the business model.
- » We need **relationships**. When we as collaborators come to the community, we must collaborate, be ourselves, and build relationships.
- » One of our cooperators has been unsatisfied with our conversation with what someone else is not doing. We must have a **clear and collective understanding** of what these tools do (feasibility study, market study, surveys) so we can **replicate them for our needs and uses**.
- » **Pay people** for their participation in the early stages of the process so that the foundation is able to be solidly built with the required full and focused attention and dedicated resources.



INSIGHTS

- » A point of conversation in our group discussion focused on **barriers** that many of us encounter within our own communities. **Deeply ingrained habits and patterns** of commerce, communication, and perceptions can and do work to impede progress toward creating healthy food alternatives in underserved communities. Many people experienced distrust or a lack of understanding about how cooperatives can benefit Black communities. There were no hard and fast solutions presented to overcoming these obstacles. It was generally agreed, however, that we need to manifest patience and humility in addition to perseverance as we continue in our work.
- » “Low income and low access are **not a reality in every poor community.**” Cooperators expect market research data to show there is money in the Black community and **reflect the voice of the city** to control their own food system. The community and especially the older people expect the city and funders to get behind the co-op. They come when the situation is dire and don’t know how to engage community members for example by door knocking. Guards are already up when white people show up.
- » “Market study metrics are remarkably racist” and are not the greatest predictors of success. The amount that whiteness plays a role is used to determine success such as the **food co-op propensity metric** that includes demographic data of income level, education level, and ethnic identity. Those metrics basically **ask if you are rich enough, white enough, or if you went to college.** They created a map that literally **labeled from good to poor based on these three metrics alone** which is used to determine if you get a co-op or not.
- » We have a way of looking at our communities through **lived experiences** and nuances that outsiders do not have. However, the people in power don’t have a solution within capitalism. We must deal with them and be clear on what (structural racism) is baked into them (institutions and systems).
- » Many non-Black individuals exhibit **microaggressions** and may lack a deep understanding of the cultural foundations of Black-led co-ops.
- » Cooperators need to have a **real discussion** around the **best model** of the cooperative or if people really want a non-profit grocery store based on the compelling reason for the co-op. The way people are organizing themselves is not cooperative. Some are nuggets of people feeling very strongly to move something forward versus staying true to cooperative principles.
- » Based on the research gathered from this project, Black led co-ops are still on the path of meeting sales results and margins based on their market studies. More research is needed in this area to get a better understanding of performance metrics.



STRATEGIES

- » **Develop and document** talking points for those with relationships with bankers that highlight the fact that Black spending helps sustain the economy and it would benefit their institution to invest in our communities.
- » **Build international solidarity** and perform a comparative analysis of successful international models through the International Cooperative Association.
- » **Holding dialogues** with banks/funding institutions around how to open more funding avenues.
- » **Create a communication campaign** for Black Philanthropy Month in August to optimize opportunities for awareness and support of our work.
- » Utilize the tool to **fast-track our youth** in a program working toward larger representation and acceleration of this work for greater impact.
- » Position data and **proforma information sharing** as “popular education.” We should have information about our proforma so that we know what data we need to meet the numbers and then educate our members and community.
- » **Address hopelessness** by considering the Community Development Model which consists of growing food and other community services. This is done by moving forward with the community by being neighbors and developing trust and confidence by not bringing in outsiders. For instance, people need access to medicine so put in a pharmacy and partner with the county, local hospitals, and health service systems.
- » **Tell a narrative** about the development of Black cooperatives.
- » Level of finance matters. For smaller co-ops (under \$1 million), Black-led market studies and funding may work well. For larger projects, (over \$1 million) work with funders with a new updated model. Pursuing both lanes as a strategy.

- » **Build a winning hand** by getting people in the beginning that have **business expertise**, understand development, know how to build, or have rehab expertise. Start with more than zeal and enthusiasm.
- » Collaborate with individuals possessing the required skill set on a temporary basis as we work together to **build our collective capacity**.
- » **Create a network of Black funders** that can help support smaller projects.
- » Have **strategic conversations** with influencers that are in decision-making funding positions and spaces with the goal of getting one or two to **buy into our new model** and practices.
- » Find innovative ways to **express the informal/shadow economy** of the Black community to be included in market study metrics.
- » **Building partnerships** with other ethnic communities could help validate any potential biases in the market study process and possibly expedite outcomes.
- » **Optimize the opportunity** to have NCBA act as a fiduciary for USDA funds. They are willing to do this for a group of co-ops that come together. For example, another co-op development organization received a multi-million dollar grant as a collective.
- » Perhaps **create an association** for people that run enterprises and build strength with the strategic goal of it organizing and supporting all the co-ops. The **predevelopment investment** is so important.
- » Market Study Group making a **collective decision** on consideration of new approaches and how the National Black Food & Justice Alliance can share the research process and findings of how people are working together.
- » Consider the **role of technology** and innovation of labor and the related impacts on our co-op development.
- » Preparation and education for co-ops on **grant reporting** upfront and throughout grant cycles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Explore these **tools and templates**:
 - » **Meal Deficit Metric** to measure the net missing meals on a community level which helps to illustrate the unmet need for food security that could be addressed.
 - » Develop a **plug-and-play template** tool for a market study similar to a business plan template. This educational tool will be used as an outline and framework.
 - » Develop a **Food Audit toolkit** to establish and collect cornerstone (foundational) data to close the dataset gap.
 - » Create guides or toolkits for **data collecting at receipt drives** or other events.
 - » Develop a standard **metric to define** and measure what we agree is the **meaning of Black-led**. Would a metric include member-owners, staff, and shoppers? What do we agree on?
 - » Develop a **level of support metric for funders** that have racial equity objectives to measure tangible improvement.
2. **Map out Black cooperatives' support network**. We can only survive if we work with each other particularly starting from a place of being under-served. A big part of how we should measure feasibility is who can help you with infrastructure; this is just as important as a price index. Perhaps this is similar to community asset mapping with a larger national scope.
3. Capture our own sales data with **digital receipt collection** and then do a comparison by building a proprietary app that collects Black co-op sales data. A **mobile application** that can take a picture of a receipt with the ability to collect data from all over the world. We can use technology to help identify what we are collectively spending money on. The app can be used to aggregate information to do the input.
4. One way to address these dynamics from a research-based approach is to consider **data from stores that cater to a specific ethnic or cultural group** within a larger population. There was a belief shared among many of the participants that a Latino or Asian-focused establishment might have more in common with a Black-owned co-op, whether it shared the same business structure or not. In these cases, the stores serve as much of a center of community cohesiveness as they do a place for retail exchange. It is often the case that these stores are de facto community centers, and a wider range of benefits are provided to their patrons than the purchasing of food. Potential research would include questions about **how far people come to patronize the establishment** or if they are willing to pay a little more because they want to support the business. These **data points** could help to quantify some of the qualitative differences that a Black-owned co-op could embody.
5. Consider including new elements in the market study context and **intent on supporting the local food system of local farmers and local artisans** into the overall business model. This approach helped them consider the bigger impact on the business community.

6. Consider **adding data collection points** related to being a sub or co-tenant to the market study.
7. Build **collective educational understanding** and capacity then create something new versus us creating something new too quickly. We are admonished to thoroughly understand the existing tools.
8. **Address leadership clogs** as blockages that are occurring, and **build a mechanism for feedback** so understanding can loop back around to the leadership.
9. Build a cohort of data research capacity and possibly recruit talent from the HBCU pool.
10. **Create a public conversation** by writing, submitting, and publishing articles, blogs in magazines, and other traditional and digital publications. Public discourse gets people in power to behave differently. This could be considered a civic engagement activity.
11. **Identify the ecosystem** that will support the co-op that are not just consumers. Identify the hubs of power and where people are gathering. **Find the commercial corridor** that would go out of its way to help Black people. Not just consumers but the ecosystem. Reach different kinds of people in order to get an accurate picture of **who is going to show up to succeed**. Black people go out of their way to show up for other Black people in a way that is not accounted for in a traditional market research study or approach to thinking about a client or consumer base. That specificity of how Black people relate to each other and show up for each other is not represented in the questions, the data, or how it is collected. That ethos does not currently exist.
12. **Consider the National Black Food & Justice Alliance performing the market research** since it has the base and ability to be flexible.
13. Check out the **Main Street Employee Ownership Act** legislation that is now open to consumer-owned co-ops.
14. Check out the Democracy at Work Institute. They get you loan ready and don't expect you to make a payment until a profit is made.
15. Check out HEAL Food Alliance. They are a powerhouse to share information in alignment with other alliances but Black-focused.
16. **Future market research data methodology. Build a hybridization** of analog and gravity-fed data. Collect Black-led only analog data to see how significant the difference is from other data. Compare new proprietary data to gravity-fed data and introduce this new approach.
 - » Gravity fed is rentable data that contains no input from the community; contains overall grocery dollars by census tract.
 - » Analog is data of stores that look like ours with linear comparisons.

Further Questions

As is typical in research studies, further questions related to the core research emerge as the field expands. Below are the questions that cooperators want to know more about. This report represents the first phase of research of this project and the Alliance will determine plans and future timeframes for further research.

In a subsequent conversation with the entire group, more questions / suggestions were raised that went beyond the initial survey interviews. Key among them was the **issue of benchmarks**. For us to determine the relevancy of current findings, it is necessary that we understand what is considered the **standard basis** for comparison. This need is consistent with the overarching desire and intention of Black-owned cooperatives to define their own measures of viability and success. The nature of what is considered important and where / how value is assigned underlies this perspective.

What kind of infrastructure is needed for us to own our own data?

Explore how new trends reformatting smaller stores are working in urban areas.

Conclusion

On a personal note, this process has been very insightful, exciting, and encouraging. The interviews were enjoyable and allowed a safe space for all participants to engage, share, and contribute freely to this work. We are collectively hopeful, willful, and in agreement that this work is a game changer for the field of Black-led cooperative market research studies. Thank you for the opportunity to serve our co-op community as your Market Research Facilitator. Special thanks to Dr. Jasmine Jackson and Michael Easterling.

This full report is the final draft that culminates the data and information gathered from our cooperators, funders, and cooperative stakeholders. For more information, inquiries, or feedback, please contact:

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Image Credit/Details

- » **Cover Page:** Participants gather for a photo during Black-led Day at the [2022 Up & Coming Conference](#), captured by Alicia Pittman
- » **Page 6-7:** Archival photo of Wedge Community Food Co-op in Minneapolis, MN
- » **Page 10-11:** A photo of the produce aisle captured at [Gem City Market](#) in Dayton, OH
- » **Page 13:** A photo of produce captured at Gem City Market in Dayton, OH
- » **Page 16-17:** Lee Jordan Jr of [Black Yield Institute](#) speaks to a group of community members in 2019 at their former Cherry Hill Community Urban Farm
- » **Page 18:** Gem City Market member, Morgan and Jalisa, pose in the market showcasing affordable meat options available at the market in Dayton, OH
- » **Page 23:** Photo of Gem City Market in Dayton, OH, captured by Glenna Jennings
- » **Page 24-25:** Baba Malik Yakini, co-founder of [Detroit Black Community Food Security Network](#) speaks to members of NBFJA at the construction site of the Detroit People's Food Co-op, captured by LeeAnn C. Morrisette
- » **Page 26:** A rendering of the Detroit People's Food Co-op at its planned location on Woodward Avenue, [Russell Baltimore](#)
- » **Page 29:** Baba Malik Yakini, co-founder of Detroit Black Community Food Security Network speaks to members of NBFJA at the construction site of the Detroit People's Food Co-op, captured by LeeAnn C. Morrisette
- » **Page 32:** Archival photo of customers at Minnesota's Credjafawn Co-op in the predominantly African-American Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul, circa 1950

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