

Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative (CUCI)

Annual Report 2015



From left to right: Phil Amadon, Michael Peck, Kristen Barker, Ellen Dienger-Vera, and Flequer Vera

Our Collective Goal

An Economy
that works
for all

The People & Successes Behind the Movement

In 2015, we've advanced toward our goal to create an economy that works for everyone — an economy that supports good, sustainable jobs; closes the wage gap; and is accountable to the communities who drive it.

Transforming communities is a big undertaking, but it's important and necessary work. It's about strengthening a community's existing resources and supporting its most valuable resource — the people who live and work there.

This past year CUCI has had numerous opportunities to share our mission and the union cooperative business model locally, nationally, and internationally. Working with 1worker1vote.org, presentations and technical assistance were provided to dozens of communities and non-profits. Support for the union cooperative movement grew. Private, local, and statewide funders and experts helped to advance CUCI's mission and launch union cooperative businesses.

Apple Steet Market brought together over 100 volunteers. This committed team united to increase community ownership. To date, the initiative has over 1100 community owners.

Sustainergy created a new partnership with Empower Cincinnati. This partnership now provides energy efficiency audits and energy saving installations for homes throughout Cincinnati.

Our Harvest continued to grow our whole sales outlets and worked with Cincinnati State to train farmers. They tackled the challenge of healthy food access with support from Interact for Health and the Cincinnati Health Department.

This report highlights the people, partners, and successes that have helped make 2015 a productive and exciting year. We are thrilled to share these with you and envision more great things for 2016.

In Solidarity,

Kristen Barker

President & Founding Board Member
Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative

Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative (CUCI)

We are a non-profit who partners with individuals and organizations to develop union cooperatives. These for-profit worker-owned businesses provide family-sustaining jobs and create an economy that works for all.

Definition of a Union Cooperative:

A Union Cooperative is a for-profit business which is owned and directed by workers. This business model utilizes the collective bargaining process and is guided by the 10 core Mondragon principles.

Stay Connected

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Update on CUCI Initiatives

Launched & Moving Forward

Apple Street Market

Apple Street Market will be a full service grocery store located on Apple Street in Northside. Products in this store will meet the diverse grocery needs of Northside residents and families. The success of this business will be driven by the ideas and input of all its customers & worker owners.

Highlights: CUCI, in partnership with the UFCW Local 75, worked with community leaders to secure over \$1.3 million in grants, loans and community ownerships. This year community ownerships exceeded 1000 owners. Christopher DeAngelis, with over 20 years of co-op grocery store experience, was hired as general manager. Final bids from contractors are being submitted, and the initiative is slated to break ground on the store this winter.



Heather Sturgill signs up a new community owner.



An example of a veggie box for the Produce Perks Program.

Our Harvest Cooperative

Our Harvest's goals are to farm sustainably create a food hub, strengthen the local food system, reduce barriers to healthy food access, increase organic vegetable production, and sustain these efforts by training farmers.

Highlights: This year Harvest employs 18 people and produces on 19 acres between two farms. Twenty-one produce farmers and local food artisans utilized the *Our Harvest Food Hub* to boost sales of their products. Our Harvest partnered with Interact for Health and the Cincinnati Health Department on the *Produce Perks Program*. This program delivers subsidized local, healthy food to neighborhoods with limited food access. Our Harvest continued to be the practicum site for Cincinnati State's Sustainable Agriculture Certificate. Additionally Our Harvest had a voice on Green Umbrella's Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council and local food action team and the Healthy Eating Sub-committee of the Creating Healthy Communities Coalition.

Sustainergy

Sustainergy is creating family sustaining jobs by helping homeowners reduce their energy expenses, and carbon footprint while increase their comfort.

Highlights: In June 2015, Sustainergy launched a partnership with a local energy initiative, Empower Cincinnati, to perform energy audits and provide energy retrofits. They are partnering with Xavier University capstone class to ramp up awareness and sales. Three employees have been hired, and the future looks bright.



From Left to Right: Cody Harrison, Flequer Vera, Phil Amadon, Sean Christner, and Lindsey Keller

Additional Partner Updates

Renting Partnerships

This nonprofit (501.c.3) organization works to create permanently affordable housing and support residents in stewardship of housing to develop the social and financial capital for those most marginalized in society. This innovative model addresses a root cause of economic and racial inequality, the lack of connection to property for low-income families who must rent long term.

Highlights: In 2015, Renting Partnerships entered into a long term lease with a nonprofit developer in Avondale. The agreement assures the nonprofit owner a fixed monthly income and Renting Partnerships control of operations. This sublease establishes residents' rights to participate in decision making and build financial equity. Their plan is to proceed with one property at a time as they build capacity, create new partnerships, and seek additional funding for the program.



Update: Sustain Sarah Center — This endeavor is currently on hold as Sarah Center continues to explore feasibility and development.

Update: Yucky Cookie Co-op — Management of this initiative has decided to not move forward with the business at this time.

People Behind the Movement



Flequer is CEO of Sustainergy and Vice President of CUCI

Flequer Vera

As a CUCI co-founder, Flequer Vera has been part of the team driving the union cooperative movement forward since day one. His background in community organizing, skill in empowering others to take action and shape policy, and a degree in Finance from the University of Cincinnati have played a crucial role in the launch of local union cooperative businesses.

What attracted Flequer to the Union Cooperative model and culture? His passion for equality and his commitment to empowering others is what drives him. "I strongly believe everyone deserves to feel a sense of belonging and to have the opportunity to better their life and positively contribute to their community regardless of citizenship, race, gender, religious affiliation, socio economics, education, or any disenfranchising characteristic. These values are cornerstones of this movement," shared Flequer.

Additionally, the potential of scalability of this business model, sustainability, and the assurance that union cooperatives make people a priority over profit, resonated with him. "I'm proud and energized to be launching businesses that are 'businesses of the people' and creating jobs mindful of barriers to employment and developed to be part of communities."

Zeke Coleman

Zeke Coleman, laid off from his previous job in the food industry, has found a living wage and his passion.

"Working for Our Harvest is not like any other job I have had. Here it's a family. It's a friendly environment to work in... you get close to people," stated Coleman.

Coleman sees this as more than a job and a pay check. "The opportunity to be a worker-owner really got my attention. It means a lot working to get more jobs for people."

Zeke says Our Harvest has lots to offer, "Here, I learned about sowing and weeding and it opened my eyes about eating healthy. The healthy food we provide helps us and our customers get the fiber and nutrients we need."



Zeke Coleman, a Our Harvest worker-owner, at the College Hill Farmers' Market.

Education & Culture

Development & Implementation

This year greatly advanced our education and outreach efforts and expanded the strategies, materials, and tools crucial to meeting CUCI's training goals.

With a grant from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, efforts began to create and implement training/education frameworks for identified groups: current worker owners, potential worker owners, and organizing teams. Curriculums, learning models and relevant resources targeting business/financial literacy, problem solving, workplace communication, and cultural/diversity sensitivity were identified and utilized for applicable trainings.

Curriculums and educational materials specific to union cooperative business model, values/principles, and culture were created and adapted. These education and culture development tools were piloted during training with current worker owners. Benchmarks and learning objectives were established for prioritized training/education strategies. Over 150 persons participated in union cooperative training sessions or solidarity building exercises.

Additionally, a second Union Co-op Symposium was held in November. Over 200 attendees from 20 different states, and from Mondragon, Spain, gathered to learn more about networks of worker-owned, unionized businesses, best practices, union co-op management, financing, and the power of the union co-op model.

CUCI aspires to be a national leader in developing trainings, protocols and curriculums specific to this business model — providing a framework for union co-op professional development in communities across the country.

Watch our web site for updates and education and culture development tools in 2016.

10 Mondragon Cooperative Principles

Open Admission	Coops will not discriminate in hiring
Democratic Organization	One worker, one vote
Sovereignty of Labor	Workers run the cooperative
Participation in Management	Development of adequate systems for participation, transparency, consultation, and negotiation
Instrumental & Subordinate Nature of Capital	Providing and creating jobs is prioritized over increasing the marginal return on investments.
Wage Solidarity	Highest paid workers earn no more than 5-7 times more than lowest paid workers.
Inter-Cooperation	Working cooperatively with other co-ops is valued and essential.
Universality	Solidarity with all those who work for economic democracy
Social Transformation	Support and invest in social change
Education	To promote establishment of these principles

The Role of CUCI

The Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative (CUCI) incubates Mondragon style union cooperatives by:

- Developing potential union cooperative business ideas
- Helping fund business feasibility studies
- Supporting business development
- Identifying community partners
- Providing training and education on the union cooperative business model and ten Mondragon principles.

The union cooperative model implements ten Mondragon principles.

These principles articulate the cooperative and participatory values that have guided Mondragon's business success.

They are labor-based and rooted in a variety of movements and experiences.

These principles affirm the freedom and empowerment of working people and the value and importance of community.

Important Partners

cincinnatiunioncoop.org

mondragon-corporation.com

usw.org

In October, 2009 Mondragon and the United Steelworkers (USW) signed a historic agreement laying the ground work for formation of Mondragon style union cooperatives in the United States.

1worker1vote.org

1worker1vote.org is building a national network of unionized worker-owned cooperative businesses to overcome opportunity, mobility, and income inequality.

CUCI Union Cooperatives

Visit @:

Applestreetmarket.coop

Ourharvest.coop

Sustainergy.coop

Rentingpartnerships.org

Our Board Members

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A Special Thanks to Our 2015 Donors

Bloom

1worker1vote.org — Mondragon International North America
Don & Gail Barker
Greater Cincinnati Foundation
Interact for Health
Cathy Kramer & Peter Block
Ohio Cooperative Development Center
Ohio Finance Fund
Jenny Thie
UFCW Local 75

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