

The Village Cooperative Market of Williamsville, Inc.

4 Cornerstones: Vision | Talent | Capital | Systems

STAGE 1 ORGANIZING



Member Threshold: 300

- Created vision to satisfy a need in the community
- Primary feasibility assessed
- Community support demonstrated for the idea
- Legal work done to prepare for incorporation
- Founding documents established: by-laws, membership
- Organizational structure established: founding Board, Project Manager, Committees
- Grant received from County for \$7,000 (County Legislative Rath and Loughrin)
- Grant received from Amherst IDA for \$5K
- Board, Project Manager & Committees set to understand cooperatives, the development model, committed to working toward best chance of long-term success
- 300 member-owner (MO) threshold achieved!

STAGE 2 FEASIBILITY & PLANNING

Member Threshold: 600

STAGE 2A - Feasibility

- Received \$10K match grant from FCI
- Market study conducted
- Established preliminary financial systems for bookkeeping
- Engaged industry-specific support for guidance in developing the project
- Commercial realtor contracted
- Board engaged an advisor for guidance in building governance foundation
- Ties with community broadened
- 500 MO threshold achieved!

STAGE 2B - Planning

- Finalized site evaluation
- Business plan and pro forma developed and refined
- Made plans and preparations to launch capital campaign
- Prepared to secure site with contingencies
- Planned General Manager search process
- 600 MO threshold achieved!

Key Decision Point: The "go/no go line"

Do we have sufficient internal readiness, member, community, financial support and at right site to approve signing a lease with contingencies? If we don't raise enough money or recruit enough members, we can still turn back.

STAGE 3 IMPLEMENTATION

Member Threshold – 1,500

STAGE 3A – Preconstruction

Member Threshold: 800

- Announced site
- Completed capital campaign
- Collected funds
- Secured financing
- Began store design
- Development bids
- Launched General Manager search
- Contracted with Project Facilities Mgr to oversee construction
- 800 MO threshold achieved

Key Decision Point: The "point of no return"

Is there sufficient capacity in all 4 cornerstones (vision, talent, capital and systems) to launch the business operation?

STAGE 3B – Construction Renovation

Member Threshold: 1,000

- Began demo
- Hired General Manager
- Construction: complete bids, oversee construction, equipment acquisition
- Build business relationships
- Develop plans for membership, merchandising, marketing, promotions and staffing
- Develop systems for the store operations
- 1,000 MO threshold achieved!

STAGE 3C – Prepare for Opening

- Build org and operational capacity
- Implement staffing, marketing and membership program plans
- 1,500 MO threshold achieved!

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

Build a Shared Vision

- ❑ Identify the needs to be met
- ❑ Visit Co-ops
- ❑ Find a mentor co-op
- ❑ Gather Information:
 - ❑ "How to Start a Food Co-op"
 - ❑ FAQ's (CDS Consulting Co-op)
 - ❑ "Cooperatives, A Tool for Community Economic Development" (UWCC)
 - ❑ Cooperative Grocer archives
 - ❑ View "A Co-op in Your Community" PPT presentation
- ❑ Contact regional cooperative development centers
- ❑ Communicate your ideas



Conduct Community Meetings

- ❑ Introduce the idea of a food co-op
- ❑ Recruit others who share the vision and are willing to dedicate time to development of a food co-op
- ❑ Build awareness and support



Identify Potential Members

- ❑ Among others, consider:
 - ❑ Natural food shoppers
 - ❑ People who want good food in a community atmosphere
 - ❑ Supporters of the co-op model
 - ❑ Local producers and their customers
 - ❑ People with special diets (gluten-free, vegan, etc.)



Identify Community Leaders

- ❑ Look for:
 - ❑ Recognized voices in your community
 - ❑ Visionaries & Change Agents
 - ❑ Politically connected
 - ❑ Organizations with social missions

Create an Effective Organization

- ❑ Recruit/identify leaders
- ❑ Act on behalf of the future members until a board of directors is elected
- ❑ Promote the vision
- ❑ Recruit and direct other helpers
- ❑ Create a structure for on-going communication and meetings with members

Setup Task Forces

- ❑ These are smaller groups of steering committee members and volunteers
- ❑ Ensure clear expectations and accountability
- ❑ Areas to cover may include:
 - ❑ Fundraising
 - ❑ Membership
 - ❑ community outreach
 - ❑ incorporation

Find People to Help

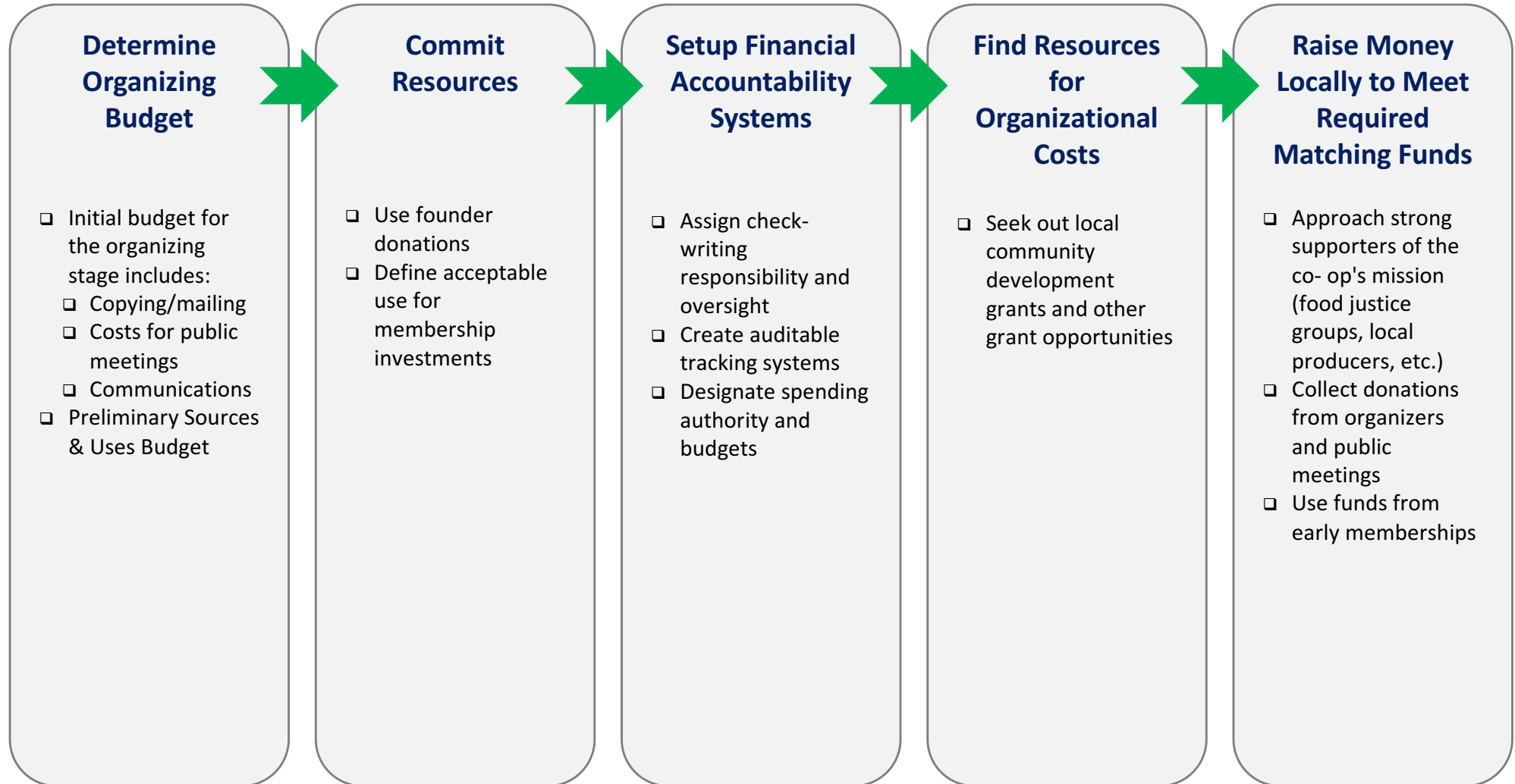
- ❑ Recruit volunteers (in addition to those on the board & steering committee) for:
 - ❑ Task force activities
 - ❑ Special events
 - ❑ Potential members
 - ❑ Civic promoters
- ❑ Identify talents and resources within your membership & community

Setup Basic Office/Admin Support

- ❑ Phone/fax line(s)
- ❑ E-mail address
- ❑ Website
- ❑ Person or persons who will keep track of decisions, reports, etc.

Find Graphics/ Web Designer

- ❑ Volunteer or paid person who can create effective presentations
- ❑ Website developer/designer



Create a Development Plan

- ❑ Budget
- ❑ Timeline
- ❑ Create task forces
- ❑ Concept Policy & Parameters

Incorporate

- ❑ File Articles of Incorporation
- ❑ Seat Founding Board

Implement Communication Systems

- ❑ Set up a web site
- ❑ Create info flyers
- ❑ Develop a steering committee communications system
 - ❑ e-mail groups
 - ❑ records of decisions, members, leads, etc.

Conduct Customer/Member Survey

- ❑ Survey community at large (helps bring recognition to the effort)
- ❑ Identify the range of goods and services desired (helps to refine store concept and vision)

Setup Acctg System and Checking Acct

- ❑ Open checking/savings account for co-op funds
- ❑ Set up accounting system sufficient for tracking member equity and loan investments, other income and organizational costs

Create Contact List

- ❑ This should be a database that includes names, phone #'s, e-mail, & notes about the person's interest in the co-op
- ❑ Include all inquiries, attendees at public meetings, volunteers, members, and anyone else whose interest is known

Define Steering Committee & Decision-Making Process

- ❑ Discuss & agree on roles & responsibilities of the steering comm.
- ❑ DOCUMENT them
- ❑ Set policy on how decision-making will occur
- ❑ Create systems of reporting & accountability
- ❑ Assign responsibility for keeping records

Research Member Programs & Bylaws

- ❑ Consider member benefits, education & outreach options, discounts (if any) that you would like to offer
- ❑ See: Best Practices for Membership and Marketing in Food Co-ops
- ❑ Review by-law options & determine member equity and loan requirements

Conduct a Preliminary Feasibility Study

- ❑ Begin to assess feasibility for a successful store
- ❑ Identify market segments
- ❑ Review initial indicators of store size and product mix

DECISION POINT:
 Are your cornerstones: **Vision, Talent, Capital, and Systems solid and strong enough to support a successful organizing effort?**