



# Annual Report 2024



# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear supporter,

As 2024 comes to a close, Cooperation Buffalo is celebrating another year of building a solidarity economy rooted in democracy and equity. Your support has been essential in creating tangible change across Buffalo, and we invite you to help us sustain this momentum.

This year, we assisted Band of Bards, an independent comics publisher championing diversity and inclusion, in becoming a worker cooperative. We provided over 450 hours of technical assistance to cooperatives like The Healing Grounds Cooperative Café, Farmer Pirates Compost, Rose Jade Consulting, and others. We welcomed 37 community members to Buffalo State University for Cooperative Change-makers: A Community Power Fellowship, and we've trained a total of 190 co-op entrepreneurs and advocates in the past 6 years through this crucial program.

In 2024, we also deployed \$100,000 in non-extractive loan capital to two cooperatives, and we have helped co-ops secure over \$1.3 million in funding since 2016. And our first Co-op Fest brought together 100+ community members to celebrate Buffalo's cooperative ecosystem!



*Cooperation Buffalo staff Andrew Delmonte, Michael Heubusch, Mike Zak, and Cecilia Johnson at Co-op Fest*

Your support helps us grow the cooperative movement. Together, we can continue building a Buffalo where everyone thrives.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Delmonte'.

Andrew Delmonte, Executive Director

## Strategic Goals

- 1. Develop and resource a thriving ecosystem of worker cooperatives and other democratic community-owned enterprises.**
- 2. Educate and mobilize a growing base of workers through popular education pedagogy.**
- 3. Build solidarity among cooperatives, member-owners, and the larger community.**
- 4. Increase Black and POC ownership in cooperatives.**
- 5. Develop and maintain internal infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing cooperative ecosystem.**



# Co-op Development & Lending

## Co-op Development

In 2024 we received 35 inquiries for potential new co-op projects, held 23 initial consultations, and made intake decisions to begin incubating 5 of those co-ops.

Since 2016, we have provided one-on-one technical assistance to over 150 co-op entrepreneurs in Western New York, and helped 11 new cooperatives to launch or convert to a co-op from a traditional business model.

In 2024 we're celebrating:

- The launch of new worker cooperative Band of Bards, an independent publisher of comics and graphic novels based in Buffalo that supports creator-owned IP, and is committed to publishing stories with a focus on representation, inclusion, and diversity. We supported Band of Bards with start-up technical assistance and counseling.
- 200+ hours of one-on-one technical assistance with the worker-owners of The Healing Grounds Cooperative, a start-up cafe on Buffalo's West Side
- 70+ hours with the worker-owners of Farmer Pirates Compost, a food scraps hauling and composting company that converted to a worker cooperative
- 50+ hours with the members of Mondragon Village Association, a Black-owned real estate investment cooperative in Buffalo
- 30+ hours with the worker-owners of Rose Jade Consulting, a cooperatively run movement, small business, and nonprofit consultancy firm in Buffalo
- An additional 100+ hours of one-on-one technical assistance with several new cooperatives in development, including an IT services company, an ecological restoration consulting and contracting business, and a mental health counseling co-op



Comic book covers produced by  
Band of Bards



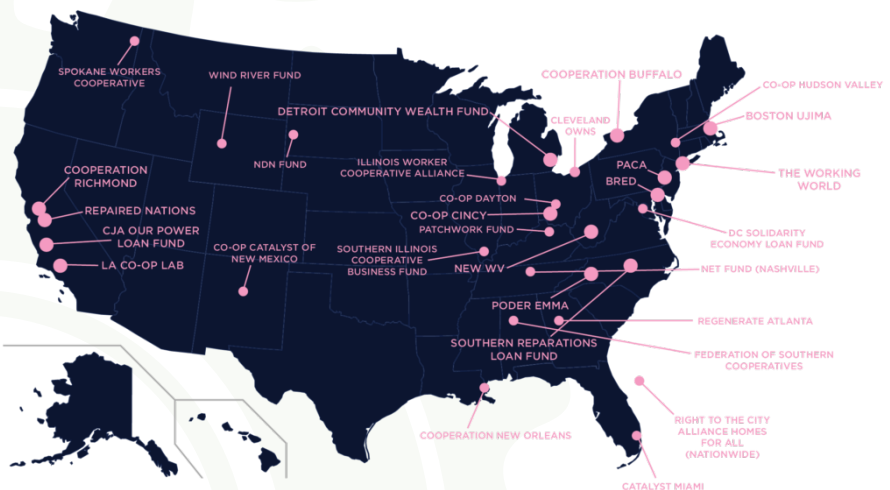
Member-owners of The Healing Grounds  
Co-op Cafe (top) and Mondragon Village  
Association (bottom)

## Lending

In 2024 we deployed \$100,000 of new loan capital to support two cooperatives in Buffalo.

Since 2016, we have helped cooperatives secure \$1,382,528.98 in capital, including \$1,003,206.98 in non-extractive loans from Seed Commons.

As part of Seed Commons, a national financial cooperative composed of over 39 member organizations across the US and Latin America, our combined impact since 2011 includes the investment of 400 loans and \$89 million into cooperatively owned businesses that create jobs, build wealth, and challenge inequality.





# Rose Jade Consulting Cooperative

## *Give Us Bread, but Give Us Roses*

It's not common in the fast-paced, high-stress world of community organizing and nonprofit social services to find people who value and practice slowing down, moving with intention, and centering care.

But Emily Terrana, one of the founders of Rose Jade Consulting, knows firsthand that if we're only fighting for sustenance—for bread but not roses—we're not going to build the abundant, compassionate, and just world that we need and deserve.



*Rose Jade Consulting worker-owners Nicolalita Rodriguez, Emily Terrana, and Harper Bishop with worker-owner-in-training India Walton.*

Emily and her co-founders Harper Bishop and Nicolalita Rodriguez have a combined fifty years of experience in the nonprofit movement and service sector, in grassroots organizing, in local government, and organized labor. They've seen it all. And their backgrounds as working class, queer and trans individuals formerly working in underground economies gives them unique and necessary vantage points for change.

Founded in 2023 as a worker cooperative, Rose Jade Consulting is their answer to this hard fought, and sometimes hurtful, collection of experiences. A movement, small business and nonprofit consultancy firm rooted in feminist and anti-oppression values, practice and vision, Rose Jade serves as a resource for social justice movement organizations, organized labor unions, progressively minded political candidates, individuals and businesses looking to deepen their commitment to building the just world that we all need.

Rose Jade's founding team graduated from Cooperation Buffalo's 2022 Cooperative Academy training program, where they participated in a cohort of teams building co-op business plans and visioning an inter-linked cooperative economy. That same year, Rose Jade entered into a technical assistance relationship with Cooperation Buffalo to support their start-up, and they accessed Cooperation Buffalo microgrant funds to pay for some of their initial start-up costs. Then, in 2024, we worked with Rose Jade to secure a \$50,000 line of credit to support the co-op's operating costs, allowing them to have financial security while waiting to be paid from client contracts.

**“Cooperatives are the future of our ecosystem. It is how we take care of each other, how we take care of our community, and it's how we can create generational wealth for all of us.”**

**—Emily Terrana, Worker-owner, Rose Jade Consulting Cooperative**

The work of facilitation, coaching, and accompaniment is a vital resource not only to the nonprofit sector, but also to the cooperative ecosystem of which Rose Jade is now part. They see themselves as active participants in “bolster[ing] our cooperative infrastructure,” explains Terrana. “To provide the training and the vision for the long haul to make sure that our cooperative ecosystem in Buffalo is really healthy and thrives and grows.”

“Cooperatives are the future of our ecosystem. It is how we take care of each other, how we take care of our community, and it's how we can create generational wealth for all of us moving forward without being a part of this really extractive system.”

As their co-op expands and welcomes new worker-owners into the fold, Rose Jade Consulting is solidifying its place in the movement for justice: as both an example of a workplace where people come first, and providing the tools and conditions for others to follow in their footsteps.

# Education & Organizing

## Cooperative Changemakers: A Community Power Fellowship

In September we welcomed 37 community members to Buffalo State University for Cooperative Changemakers: A Community Power Fellowship.

This 11-week program provided skills training, networking, and the exchange of ideas among a passionate cohort seeking to build democratic power in our community. Between the Fellowship and our previous Cooperative Academy course, we've trained a total of 190 co-op entrepreneurs and advocates in the past 6 years who are 56% BIPOC and 68% women, trans, and gender non-conforming.



## Training Partnerships

We partnered with Justice for Migrant Families and Pilgrim St. Luke's UCC to provide a multi-week training for refugee and immigrant food entrepreneurs to learn the basics of operating a successful food service cooperative. We also presented workshops and clinics in partnership with the Women's Business Center at Canisius, The Exchange @ Beverly Gray, and longtime co-op ally Lexington Co-op Markets teaching the basics of cooperative business, governance, and finance.

## Organizing for a Strong Co-op Ecosystem

In 2024 we also strengthened the local cooperative ecosystem through:

- Quarterly mixers bringing together cooperative member-owners and allies
- Co-hosted Buffalo's first Sober Ride Co-op Tour, a bike ride highlighting our growing cooperative economy
- Co-hosted Our City Buffalo's 2024 Anti-Displacement Summit and presented a workshop on shifting to models of non-extractive finance
- Showed up in neighborhoods across the city to build relationships and talk co-ops



## Telling Our Cooperative Story

Perhaps you spotted us in Buffalo Business First in March, on WBFO's What's Next? in July, or on the Black Gems Dive In Podcast this year, discussing Buffalo's rich cooperative history, sharing the opportunity of worker cooperative conversions to preserve locally owned businesses for future generations, and highlighting the inspiring stories of the gutsy and trailblazing cooperatives in Buffalo that are challenging mainstream ideas about work and community self-determination every day.



# Co-op Fest 2024



**In September we went BIG with our first annual Co-op Fest!** Cooperatives from across Buffalo and Western New York joined together to make this end-of-summer celebration a blast, treating attendees to food, drink, games, merch, music, and the magic of a cooperative solidarity economy. The event provided an opportunity to expose local co-ops to new customers, a celebratory atmosphere for co-op members to mix and mingle, and introduced well over 100 community members to cooperative businesses in their neighborhoods.

Thank you to all of the vendors, sponsors, volunteers, and most of all the guests for making the event a success! We could not have done it without you.

From the start, the vibes were immaculate with guests enjoying samples from Lexington Co-op Markets and Extra Extra Pizza, baked goods from BreadHive, and cookies and cacao from The Healing Grounds. The BloodThirsty Vegans and Miller and the Other Sinners brought the jams, getting the crowd dancing and energized. Ecos Cooperative, Farmer Pirates Compost and Urban Roots shared knowledge about our local ecology, while Good Neighbors Credit Union and Nickel City Housing Co-op shared how to become a member of their co-op.



**Cooperatives are one part of the solidarity economy. Growing out of social movements in Latin America and the Global South, the solidarity economy provides real alternatives to capitalism, where communities govern themselves through participatory democracy, cooperatives and public ownership, and a culture of solidarity and respect for the earth.**

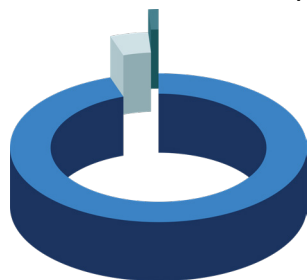


In addition to local cooperatives, Co-op Fest featured other aspects of the solidarity economy, including The Tool Library, Transcend Nickel City, Colored Girls Bike Too, and PUSH Buffalo. We hope you took the time to get to know these projects and their missions a bit better.

Many thanks to Tiny Thai for stopping by with their delicious food, and to Autark Brewhouse for providing adult beverages, and of course so much appreciation to Five Points Bakery for allowing us to use their space! We are already looking forward to next year's Co-op Fest and hope you are too.

# 2024 Financial Report

**Total 2024 Income**  
\$371,618



- Grants
- Individual Donations
- Technical Assistance and Consulting

**Total 2024 Expenses**  
\$392,893



- Staff Expenses
- Contactors
- Microgrants to Cooperatives
- Program Expenses
- Office Expenses
- Other Expenses

Cooperation Buffalo is fiscally sponsored by Seed Commons. Income and Expense numbers displayed here are preliminary drafts, which may change before Seed Commons presents final audited financial statements.

## Board of Directors



**Kathryn Franco**, President  
*Director of Alumni Engagement and Community Relations in the School of Social Work, University at Buffalo*



**India Walton, RN**, Board Chair  
*Senior Strategist, RootsAction*



**Adam Alas**, Secretary  
*Organizer, 1199SEIU Massachusetts*



**Tori Kuper**, Treasurer  
*Director, School for Democratic Management, Democracy at Work Institute*



**Harper Bishop**  
*Executive Director, Our City Action Buffalo  
Worker-Owner, Rose Jade Consulting Cooperative*

## Staff

**Andrew Delmonte**  
*Executive Director*



**Cecilia Johnson**  
*Cooperative Developer*



**Michael Heubusch**  
*Cooperative Developer*



**Mike Zak**  
*Cooperative Developer*



## Our Affiliations





# Join the movement for economic democracy

## Make a donation

Use the QR code or visit [www.cooperationbuffalo.org](http://www.cooperationbuffalo.org) and click "Donate" to make a secure online donation today! Contact us at [info@cooperationbuffalo.org](mailto:info@cooperationbuffalo.org) if you have questions or would like to make a larger gift.



## Get involved

Visit our website to learn more about the cooperative economy, how to start a cooperative, or how to sell your business to its workers.

## Connect with us

Cooperation Buffalo  
218 Grant Street  
Buffalo, NY 14213  
(716) 541-0407

[info@cooperationbuffalo.org](mailto:info@cooperationbuffalo.org)  
[www.cooperationbuffalo.org](http://www.cooperationbuffalo.org)  
[@coopbuffalo](https://www.instagram.com/coopbuffalo)

