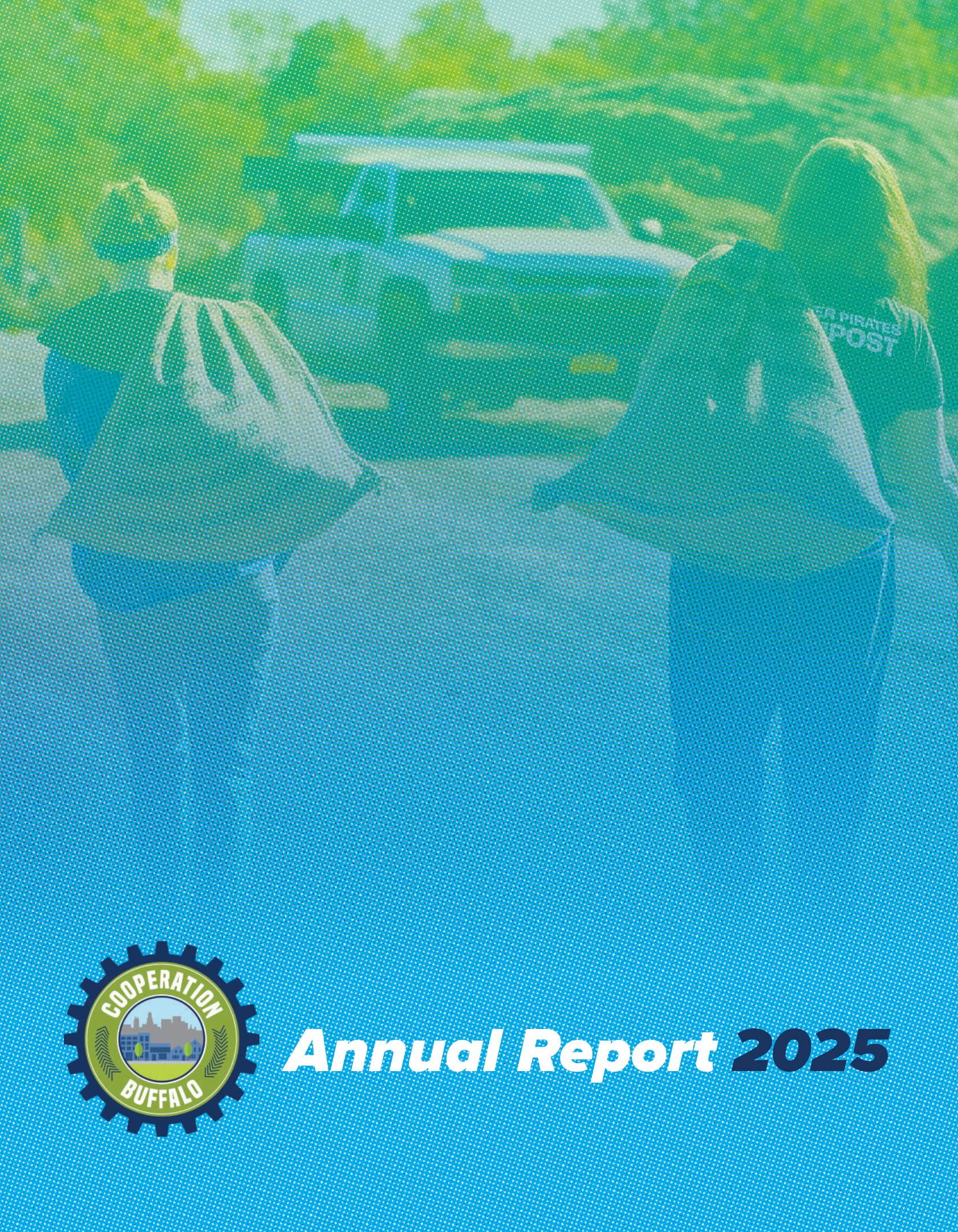




Annual Report 2025



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear supporter,

In the midst of so many struggles for justice globally, nationally, and at home in Buffalo, we are reminded that in order for change to happen, and in order for the working class to have a stake in our future, we must give workers and communities ownership of that future.

Cooperation Buffalo works every day to expand ownership opportunities for Western New York workers and neighbors. We train, support, and fund worker-owned and community-owned cooperative enterprises in underserved communities and with working class people because we all deserve an economy that puts people first—one that prioritizes good jobs, economic stability, and community needs above profit.



In 2025 we deployed \$360,000 in new loan capital to local cooperatives, including the worker co-op Farmer Pirates Compost to support their expansion, hire new workers, and purchase new vehicles. We assisted new, existing, and prospective cooperatives with over 550 hours of technical assistance. We welcomed 36 new co-op entrepreneurs and advocates to Buffalo State University for our annual Cooperative Changemakers Fellowship, and trained over 200 individuals through public workshops, teach-ins, and in-depth co-op worker training.

There are no shortcuts to building real worker and community power. Changing our economic paradigm from oligarchy to shared ownership, community control, and economic democracy is going to take all of us, whatever we have to offer, each day. Whether you're able to join our growing community of monthly donors, or to support us with a one-time gift, please help us continue to invest in the entrepreneurs and changemakers that are building an economy that works for all.

In solidarity,

Andrew Delmonte, Executive Director



Our 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 2025 we received 35 inquiries for potential new co-op projects, held 23 initial consultations, and made intake decisions to begin incubating 6 of those co-ops.

Since 2016, we have provided one-on-one technical assistance to over 175 co-op entrepreneurs in Western New York, including start-ups, existing cooperatives, and conversions of traditional businesses to cooperative ownership.



Co-op Development

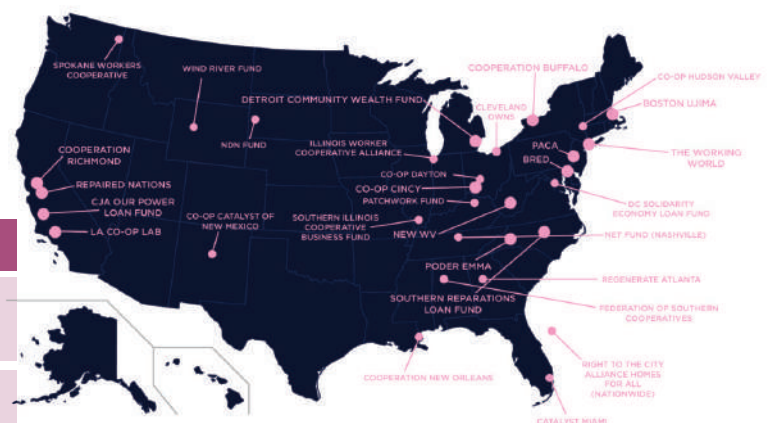
23	New co-op entrepreneurs & teams received technical assistance in 2025
60	Workers supported through funding or technical assistance provided to their cooperatives in 2025
550+	Hours of technical assistance provided to cooperative businesses in 2025
175+	Total co-op entrepreneurs and teams that have received technical assistance since 2016
13	Total new cooperatives that have launched with our support since 2016

Lending

In 2025 we deployed \$360,000 of new loan capital to support cooperatives in Buffalo.

Since 2016, we have helped co-ops secure over \$1.7 million in capital, including \$1.4 million in non-extractive loans from Seed Commons.

As part of Seed Commons, a national financial cooperative of over 39 member organizations across the US and Latin America, our combined impact since 2011 includes the investment of 434 loans and \$109 million into cooperatively owned businesses that create jobs, build wealth, and challenge inequality.



Co-op Lending

\$360K	New lending to cooperative businesses in Western New York in 2025
\$1.4M	Total non-extractive loans made to cooperative businesses in Western New York since 2016



Breaking It Down: Scaling Impact with Farmer Pirates Compost

You can't grow in poor soil.

This was a main reason that Farmer Pirates Compost began making compost from food scraps and organic waste in 2012 to serve small urban farms. There was so much organic material leaving the city every day that could instead be used to create a rich, nutrient dense, organic fertilizer the farmers so desperately needed.

The same is true for small businesses and cooperatives: growth doesn't happen without the right care, attention, and nutrients arriving when they're most needed. As Farmer Pirates Compost scales its impact in the community and with its worker-owners, Cooperation Buffalo has provided support, training, and capital at key moments to nurture a strong, and growing, worker cooperative.

Farmer Pirates Compost first connected with Cooperation Buffalo when the co-owners of this small LLC desired to take on a municipal contract. With growth in mind, they knew that the benefits of ownership were something they wanted to share with new team members. In 2023, the co-owners transitioned the company to a worker cooperative with the support of Cooperation Buffalo.

"We always knew that we wanted to function like a worker cooperative," says worker-owner Terra. "We wanted a model where everyone who is working with us can have the same benefits, whether that's financial or decision-making. It's very rewarding to see something that you've directly contributed to creating do well, and for you to do well in return."

As a member of Seed Commons, a cooperative of locally rooted, non-extractive loan funds, Cooperation Buffalo was able to secure just under \$90,000 for Farmer Pirates Compost to purchase a new compost vehicle and gear up for the first-of-its-kind contract with the City of Buffalo.



Worker-owner Bill loads compost into a new compost screener financed by Cooperation Buffalo.

"It's a pilot program," Terra explains, "offered to 2,000 residents in the city to start separating out their food scraps, putting them in a separate tote, and bringing it to the curb along with their garbage and recycling. We then pick up the food scraps, and compost it right here in the city."

Two years later, Farmer Pirates Compost began making preparations for further growth. With plans to add more residents, more municipal programs, and more commercial clients, the co-op found itself in need of new investments in the work site, vehicles, and equipment. In 2025, Cooperation Buffalo provided a non-extractive loan of \$260,000 to purchase additional vehicles for their fleet, a new compost screener, and other work site improvements.



Worker-owner Jeana lifts compost into the bed of a truck.

"Cooperation Buffalo gives us the tools to figure out how we can work better as a team as we grow," says worker-owner Jeana, who joined the team in 2023.

Cooperation Buffalo staff have worked diligently alongside the Farmer Pirates worker-owners for over two years, supporting the co-op's growth with strategic and business guidance, connections to the broader co-op community, and the financial capital to make investments exactly when they're needed.

As the business grows, their impact grows. Since 2023, the workforce has doubled in size from 5 to 10 workers, with 6 worker-owners. In 2025, Farmer Pirates Compost diverted nearly 1.7 million pounds of organic material from the landfill (that's 33,000 pounds per week, if you're wondering), an increase of 18% over the previous year. And they're not done yet.

Consistent, long-term relationships and patient capital allow Cooperation Buffalo to be an accessible and responsive partner to both new and established cooperatives. It's the key nutrient mix for a strong co-op ecosystem, and for growing the number of worker-owners who are building rich futures for themselves and their communities.



Worker-owner Tim drives a new truck financed by Cooperation Buffalo.

Education and Organizing



Cooperative Changemakers: A Community Power Fellowship



In September we welcomed 35 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 225 co-op entrepreneurs and advocates in the past 7 years who are 56% BIPOC and 68% women, trans, and gender non-conforming.

Co-op Fest

In July we hosted the second annual Co-op Fest! Nine Cooperatives and three solidarity economy organizations joined together to make this celebration a success, with over 100 people enjoying pizza, family friendly activities, music, and the magic of a cooperative solidarity economy.



Organizing a Strong Co-op Ecosystem

In 2025 we also strengthened the local cooperative ecosystem through:

- Hosting workshops with the Small Business Development Center at SUNY Buffalo State and UB Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership on succession planning and converting existing businesses to worker cooperatives
- Providing workshops to staff at Providence Farm Collective and Lexington Co-op Markets on cooperative principles and democratic decision-making
- Facilitating training for entrepreneurs on the Business Model Canvas for WEDI's Entrepreneurship Assistance Center
- Co-hosting Buffalo's second Co-op Bike Tour with Sober Ride, highlighting our growing cooperative economy
- Partnering with Justice for Migrant Families, Our City Buffalo, 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 production and retail cooperative
- Co-hosting Our City Buffalo's 2025 Anti-Displacement Summit, where we presented a workshop on ways to democratize your workplace
- And we engaged cooperatives and cooperative developers across New York State by organizing, sponsoring, and presenting at this year's New York Cooperative Summit in Albany.





Living Into Our Values: Extra Extra Pizza

The Seven Cooperative Principles are the foundation for how cooperatives operate and position themselves in the world.

These principles, and the values of solidarity, deep democracy, and anti-oppression guide our work at Cooperation Buffalo.

In a time of rising authoritarianism and repression of liberatory movements, it is more important than ever for us to stand firmly in our principles as we work to build a better world. For this reason, we began the tradition of the "Living into Our Values" award in 2025 to honor a local cooperative that exemplifies these Cooperative Principles that are our North Star.

For the inaugural Living into Our Values award, we honored Buffalo's first cooperatively owned full service pizza shop and wine bar Extra Extra Pizza for their embodiment of Principle 7: Concern for Community.

"Community" can be defined in many ways, and in all of the communities Extra Extra Pizza is a part of, they exemplify care.

Food service work is an often dehumanizing and undignified experience. The creativity and insight of the workers is often stifled and unheard. From day one, Extra Extra Pizza decided to confront these issues and take care of its workers by centering their needs, giving workers an opportunity to share in equal ownership and decision making, and to earn a living wage, without relying on tips.

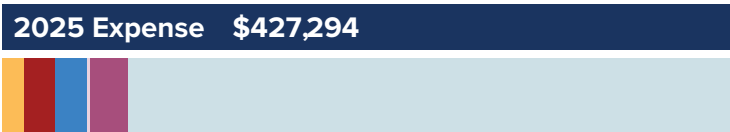
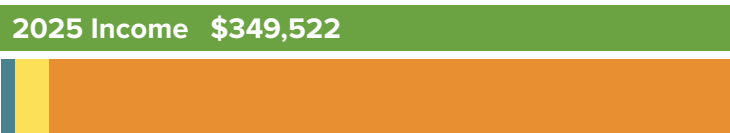


Within our local cooperative community, the worker-owners at Extra Extra Pizza have consistently shown up for others and have participated in many co-op community events. And Extra Extra boasts 4 worker-owners who have all graduated from Cooperation Buffalo's Cooperative Academy and Cooperative Changemakers Fellowship program.

Extra Extra has also made sure to share a slice of their pie with local charitable causes by contributing alongside customers through their monthly donation competition. Combined, these donations totaled over \$15,000 in 2025 to Family Promise of WNY, the WNY Law Center, The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, Starlight Studio, and Justice for Migrant Families. It should be no surprise that Extra Extra lives and leads by the motto "put people first!"



Financial Report



- Grants
- Individual Contributions
- Earned Income
- Staff Expenses
- Program Expenses
- Contractors
- Office Expenses
- Microgrants to Cooperatives
- 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.

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We are so thankful for the consistent support and partnership of the individual monthly donors who make up our Collective Power Giving Circle. Become a monthly donor at cooperationbuffalo.org/donate.

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Join the movement for economic democracy



Become a monthly sustainer

When you give monthly to Cooperation Buffalo, your consistent support allows us to keep showing up for the entrepreneurs and changemakers working to bring economic justice to Buffalo. Scan the QR code or visit cooperationbuffalo.org/donate to join the Collective Power Giving Circle today.



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

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