



NYC Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative

March 2025



careers
businesses
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What is WCBDI?

The NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS), with support from the New York City Council, helps the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) offer innovative ways for New Yorkers to overcome economic and social inequality.

Worker cooperatives are businesses that are owned and controlled by their workers (worker-owners). Worker cooperatives give New Yorkers the opportunity to co-own a business, creating sustainable and dignified jobs while developing community wealth - particularly for people who lack access to traditional business ownership.

WCBDI Overview

- Mayor Bill De Blasio and NYC Council launched WCBDI in Fiscal Year 2015 to support the positive impact worker cooperatives have on New York City
- WCBDI was created to strengthen the existing ecosystem of cooperative developers in NYC
- NYC City Council passed Local Law 22 in 2015



What are our services?

Starting a Worker Cooperative

- Get help with starting and managing a worker cooperative. We provide training on the basic skills to run a business and can help you launch an operational worker cooperative.

Transitioning to a Worker Cooperative

- Our network of expert service providers have a proven track record of helping NYC business owners stabilize businesses, complete business sales to employees, and achieve growth. The Owner to Owners hotline provides the expertise to explore employee ownership and its many benefits at no cost to NYC business owners.
- Visit Owner2Owners.nyc or call (646) 363-6592.

What are our services?

Continued...

One-on-One Support Services

- If you're already in a worker cooperative, we can help you operate and grow your business through one-on-one support services.

Legal Support

- From incorporating your business to creating a patent, we can help your worker cooperative with a variety of legal needs through tailored one-on-one legal consultations.

Finance Support

- We offer specialized financing support for worker cooperatives.

Streamlined Conversion

CONVERSION

When a small business owner retires or otherwise leaves, what happens to the business? One option is to sell to investors or competitors, which can be profitable for successful businesses but opens the possibility of downsizing or a total overhaul of the business. Some business owners are turning to another option: selling to their employees and thereby converting their business to a worker cooperative. The Working World (TWW) is one WCBDI partner that helps convert businesses to worker cooperatives.

1

Pre-deal

- TWW connects with business owners
- TWW conducts a business intake assessment
- TWW and the business owner negotiate an aspirational deal and sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU)

2

Diligence

- TWW reviews business documents and financials
- TWW and the business owner may renegotiate a new deal
- TWW reviews detailed financials, managerial and legal documents with business owners and workers
- Managerial transition plan developed with business owners, workers, and TWW



3

Execution

- Deal and transition plan are presented to the staff
- Final contracts are signed, and assets are transferred to the workers
- The business transaction is completed

4

Post-deal

- TWW supports new worker-owners to:
 - execute their transition plan
 - develop ownership culture
 - achieve business goals
- Governance is transferred to the workers
- Technical assistance continues until the business is sustainable



WCBDI Partners

- 1** — **Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative**
Connect worker coops to local supply chain.
- 2** — **Business Outreach Network**
Provides technical services and financing.
- 3** — **CAMBA**
Provides technology education and services.
- 4** — **Center for Family Life**
Incubates worker cooperatives and provides technical services.
- 5** — **Democracy at Work Institute**
Provides education and networking. Also plays leadership role in WCBDI.
- 6** — **Green Worker Cooperatives**
Offers cooperative education to launch and develop new coops.
- 7** — **Mothers on the Move**
Incubates worker cooperatives, provides education and technical assistance.
- 8** — **New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives**
Provides education and networking. Also plays a leadership role in WCBDI.
- 9** — **The ICA Group**
Provides technical support and education to convert businesses into worker coops.
- 10** — **TakeRoot Justice**
Support worker coops with legal support and governance issues.
- 11** — **Urban Upbound**
Incubates worker cooperatives and provides technical services.
- 12** — **The Working World**
Provides financing for worker cooperative.
- 13** — **The Worker's Justice Project**
Provides education and technical services.

WCBDI Successes

Since 2015,

- WCBDI has supported over **1,000 businesses and organizations**
- Majority of worker owners are women, immigrants and/or people of color.
- Top 3 Industries of NYC's Worker Cooperatives: Cleaning Services; Professional Services; Manufacturing
- **First Franchise Cooperative** in US Created - Brightly Cleaning Cooperative
- NYC now has more Worker Cooperatives than any other city in the USA.

318 Worker
Cooperatives
Created

1330 Jobs
Created

24,585
Educational
Services
Delivered

15,482
Technical
Services
Delivered



Success Stories

Claire Taylor Hansen

“ICA Group was an invaluable guide in our process to convert to a worker-owned co-op. They gave us just the right amount of support and information every step of the way. They also met our team where we were in terms of what we needed to know and how we needed to process each decision. They were responsive, clear, and helpful. I hope to continue working with and learning from them.”

Daniela Familia

“This year has been an intense journey of learning in all areas of the cooperative, interacting with my colleagues, and learning from all of them. It’s a dream because all of us came from different places, trying to get ahead, and for me this has made it a reality to have economic independence, and to be able to give our families our resources. We have all put in effort for this to grow, like our baby.”

Beata Widuchowska

“I used to own a bakery, and as the sole owner all the responsibilities fell on me. Now, in our cooperative, I know I can turn to my co-owners. If I don’t have the solution, we can talk together and figure out what to do. I feel more mentally calm as the owner of a cooperative because I can count on my co-owners.”

Thank You



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