

TRACK 1: EMBRACING CHANGE

101 Changing Our Co-ops for Our Changing World: Diversity & Inclusion Strategy Case Studies

June 12, 10:15 – 11:45 am

Ballroom 1

Moderator: Anne O’Gara, Mississippi Market

Invited Panelists: Brandon Kane, General Manager Green Star Co-op; Pam Mehnert, General Manager Outpost Natural Foods; Beth Ley, Human Resources Manager, Wheatsville Co-op; Nick Seeburger, Operations Manager, or LaDonna Redmond, Outreach Specialist, Seward Community Cooperative; Anne O’Gara, Organizational Development Specialist, Mississippi Market Natural Foods Co-op

Cooperatives are agents of change. What started as a radical fringe movement to change our food system has become a primary growth category in our industry. Despite these radical roots, cooperatives are still defining their role in addressing our country’s systemic racial inequities. The desire for good food is universal, and yet, for so many of us, our co-ops — board, management, and customers — do not fully reflect the changing demographics of our country. In this workshop, you’ll hear from five co-ops who have adopted diversity and inclusion strategies and driven success to their social and financial bottom line.

102 Building Alignment for Change — Boise Co-op Case Study

June 12, 1:30 – 3 pm

Ballroom 1

Saul Seyler, Store Manager, Boise Consumer Cooperative

When multiple competitors announced plans to open in Boise (Whole Foods, Natural Grocers, Rosauers, and Trader Joe’s) within two years, the Co-op was not ready organizationally, operationally, or culturally. With a new management team at the helm, a honest self-assessment was the first step. Then the hard work started. Come learn what Boise did, what they wish they had done in hindsight, and how your co-op can get ready for whatever changes or challenges may be coming your way.

103 Culture Change Through Crucial Conversations

June 12, 3:30 – 5 pm

Ballroom 1

Sarah Dahl, CDS Consulting Co-op

Conflict is inevitable, but how we deal with it can greatly affect whether or not it is productive or destructive. When faced with a conflict with someone, we tend to consider two options: 1. Avoid it and maintain the peace, or 2. let them know exactly what we think but risk damaging the relationship. There is a third way, to be both candid and caring, helping you get the results you want without hurting the relationship. In this workshop, we’ll talk about how to work through conflict to resolution.

104 The New Normal: Thriving in a Competitive Landscape

June 13, 10:30 am – Noon

Ballroom 1

Dave Olson, National Co+op Grocers

Competition is here, our competitors are better than ever, and they continue to grow and improve at an astonishing rate. This workshop will look at market analysis, recent competitor growth trends, and National Co+op Grocers' internal data to illustrate the changing competitive landscape. We will talk about how co-ops who take the threat seriously and make themselves into stronger competitors can continue to thrive in their communities. This session will present an overview of major competitors, including strategic strengths and weakness, and highlight recent success stories of NCG co-ops that adjusted to the new landscape and, as a result, are stronger co-ops today. Finally, this workshop will provide practical guidance for preparing your co-op when a new competitor enters the market, including: projecting financial impact, communicating internally, developing a culture of readiness, designing competitive and differentiation strategies, messaging and marketing effectively, investing in the store before competition opens, and pricing and promoting competitively to address specific competitors.

105 Rebranding Against the Blurred Lines of Mainstream Retailers

June 13, 2 – 3:30 pm

Ballroom 1

Jessica Pierce, Director of Brand Marketing, The Wedge Community Co-op

With the mainstreaming of organic and local, competition comes in all shapes and sizes. Retailers such as Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, and Target are all touting organic and local within their stores. In order to defend against the competitive grocery landscape and deepen our roots within the Twin Cities community, The Wedge Community Co-op underwent a year-long strategic rebranding process. Through a collaborative staff and board RFP process, The Wedge partnered with a design agency to gain strategic insights through focus groups and develop a brand platform and style guide, and implement rebranded in-store signage, a bi-weekly Fresh Flyer, ownership materials, website, private label packaging, a newsletter, and more. Gain valuable insight on what it takes to rebrand a co-op from this successful veteran.