**Skills and Training**

In this section, we outline the skills and knowledge that can be applied to posts for the development of the co-operative sector. We also provide a template for a business relationship programme that officers can use to manage the relationship with their local co-operatives.

Whilst researching for the CCIN policy lab, we discovered that officers from all departments within local authorities were involved in working to support the cooperative economy. These include:

Neighbourhood Planning

Commissioning and Procurement Policy

Homelessness

Libraries

Arts and Culture

Visitor Economy

Environmental Health

Skills and Education

Economic Development

Planning

Public Health

Youth Services

Green Infrastructure (and Blue Infrastructure)

Land and Property

Trading Standards

Early Years Services

Housing

**Skills**

The skills that are common amongst officers are summarised here and can be used in role profiles. Officers with these skills generally work in either Local Government Policy, Business Support or Community Development. The skills common to those roles are shown below, along with the skills that Co-operatives UK identify as specialist to co-operative development workers.

1. **Policy**

* Good written and verbal communication skills, to absorb complex information and present it to different audiences in a clear and accessible way.
* Interpersonal skills, to work and build relationships with a wide range of people holding different views.
* The ability to understand diverse perspectives and to be able to successfully influence and negotiate.
* Effective research and analysis skills (including quantitative and qualitative), needed to build an evidence base from which you will work.
* Good organisation skills, to track priorities, work to deadlines and manage projects.
* A flexible and adaptable approach, in order to respond to shifting priorities and a rapidly evolving external environment.
* The ability and desire to acquire and maintain knowledge of a policy area or areas.
* A commitment to learning and improvement.
* Good political judgement and initiative, for making decisions autonomously or advising others on the most effective course of action.

1. **Community Development**

* Work with individuals, families or whole communities, empowering them to:
  + Identify their assets, needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities.
  + Plan what they want to achieve and take appropriate action.
  + Develop activities and services to generate aspiration and confidence

1. **Business Support**

* Providing information on finance, funding and grants.
* Offering mentoring and coaching to help a business through changes.
* Providing support on the business planning process.
* Giving advice on business improvement techniques.
* Introducing businesses to networks and associates.
* Supplying specialist support to specific business sectors.
* Offering specialist support to develop international trade agreements.
* Informing and influencing government policy on business support.
* Designing and delivering training seminars to provide business support to a wide audience

1. **Dedicated co-operative support specialists**

* Understanding what a co-operative is and the cooperative advantage.
* An understanding of types of co-operatives and ownership models, how to recognise and determine appropriate structures.
* Experience of business planning through a co-operative lens.
* An understanding of co-operative finances: financial modelling and systems, book keeping and accounts.
* Understanding of the use of withdrawable share capital and the concept of community shares.
* Experience of supporting start-up, growth and conversion - co-operative models in each phase of the business life-cycle.
* Knowledge of governance - culture and technical.
* Knowledge of human resources issues, (cultural and technical), including managing conflict in co-operatives.
* Experience of member training, inductions, engagement.

1. **Cross Sector working**

* Co-ordination – linking different people or organisations.
* Facilitation – enabling them to work together productively.
* Communication – interpreting different organisational ‘languages’ and expressing ideas and options in a way that everyone can understand.
* Networking – forming and maintaining relationships in less formal ways.
* Negotiating – understanding different interests and brokering bargains.
* Conflict resolution – identifying sticking points and finding common ground.
* Risk-taking – dealing with uncertainty, making trade-offs and accommodating the unexpected.
* Problem-solving – creative and lateral thinking.
* Self-management – ability to prioritise and organise time.
* Analysis – understanding different organisational environments and complex policy contexts.

**Case Study: Glasgow Co-operative Development Unit**

Co-operative Glasgow was established in 2013, with two main aims. These were to:

Make Glasgow a Co-operative Council, by aiming to grow co-operative businesses and social enterprises, and devolve power to our people;

-Establish a Co-operative Development Unit (CDU) within the Council’s Development and Regeneration Services to promote the development of co-operatives and other social enterprises in the city.

The CDU team is committed to developing co-operative organisations and co-operative ways of working across Glasgow and within Glasgow City Council (GCC). It delivers against GCC’s Strategic Plan and the Fairer Glasgow objectives of the Glasgow Economic Strategy and also contributes to Scotland’s Economic Strategy, particularly inclusive growth and the Social Enterprise Strategy.

A Co-operative Champions Network provides effective strategic support to the work of the CDU and the objectives of Co-operative Glasgow. The Network comprises representatives from across the Council and its arm’s length external organisations. Its remit includes identifying potential co-operative service delivery opportunities and communicating ‘Co-operative Glasgow’ internally and with external partner organisations.

The Network is chaired by the Executive Member for Health and Social Care, with additional political representation from the Deputy Leader of the Council, who was previously the Network’s Chair.

Alan Davidson, Principal – Economic Initiatives was asked in 2012 to develop the co-operative sector. He previously worked for the third sector. His first job in GCC was working with the City’s Credit Unions. At the time of an evaluation in 2017, the sector had grown by 17% to 122 since 2014, with an 8% rise in employment, and 35% rise in turnover.

1. **Training**

Many resources are available to officers and creating networks can play a key role, not only sharing knowledge but also as a sounding board for ideas.

Co-operative College courses are a useful resource if you want to provide training for your staff on a variety of topics including co-operative values and principles.

<https://www.co-op.ac.uk>

1. **Business Relationship Programme**

A Business Relationship Programme is a useful tool to record activity with your co-operatives. This can be shared with other officers and departments to maintain an updated account of activity for the particular contact.

The document records details of contacts and frequency and nature of contact. This can be adapted to your requirements at a local level to reflect the support on offer.

Download: *5 Officer Roles\_BRP Template.xls*

**Case Study: Four Greens Community Trust**

The Four Greens Community Trust (FGCT) runs a wellbeing hub in the north of Plymouth as well as associated assets that are used for community energy schemes and local employment. A case study discussing how it was set up and the officers and councillors who were involved is available here:

[Four Greens Community Trust](https://www.councils.coop/case-study/four-greens-community-trust-plymouth/)