



# The **impact** of cooperative businesses



The cooperative business model is a compelling way to run a company. Employee-owned companies are often both resilient and successful, as they're central to their communities. But many entrepreneurs and small business owners aren't familiar with the benefits of the coop model, nor how much value cooperatives bring to the UK economy.

Find out more about the powerful impact of the cooperative business model and whether it could be right for you.

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# Cooperatives sector growth



First of all, what’s a coop? A coop is a business that’s owned and controlled by its members, whether they are employees, customers, residents or suppliers. They all have a say in how the company is run. Coops are profitable but also seek to bring value to their members and communities.

Coops are resilient. More than 80% of coops survive their first five years, compared to less than 40% of businesses overall. 2025 was a record year for the sector, generating almost £43bn in income from nearly 7,400 businesses. Check out the latest [Co-operative and Mutual Economy](#) report for more financial data.

Coops provide good jobs with good values. Most coops share values such as equality, solidarity, self-help and social responsibility. They provide good jobs that are fairly paid, and they place more women in leadership positions. Read more about [cooperative identity, values and principles](#).

| Sectors                         | Coops | Income  |
|---------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Agriculture                     | 513   | £9.2bn  |
| Arts and culture                | 197   | £13.7m  |
| Digital                         | 148   | £11.3m  |
| Education                       | 234   | £657.3m |
| Energy and environment          | 314   | £57m    |
| Finance                         | 401   | £573.9m |
| Food service and pubs           | 348   | £57.1m  |
| Health and social care          | 118   | £205.6m |
| Housing                         | 802   | £741.2m |
| Manufacturing                   | 78    | £434.1m |
| Social clubs and trade unions   | 2,369 | £540.3m |
| Professional and legal services | 149   | £96.8m  |
| Retail                          | 752   | £29.1bn |
| Sports and recreation           | 563   | £922m   |
| Transport                       | 33    | £9.8m   |
| Other                           | 352   | £201.6m |

Source: [Co-operative and Mutual Economy report](#) | [Co-operatives UK](#)

# Sector spotlights



## Manufacturing

Coops can be larger worker-owned factories or smaller-scale craft producers. For example, **First Milk** is a dairy coop with 800 members that have pooled their resources for community and bargaining power. Manufacturing cooperatives generate more than £434m in income across the country.

## Professional and legal services

Law firms and accountancy practices can also be coops. **PG Collective** is a group of freelance consultants working across governance to communications, coming together to learn from each other as they support organisations driving for social change. Professional and legal services contribute nearly £100m to the UK economy.

## Retail

Retail of any type, whether it’s independents, markets or online, can be coops. **The Wine Society** is an online wine cooperative operating since the Victorian era, with 140,000 active members who value being in community with like-minded professionals that appreciate customer service. There are more than 750 retail coops across the country generating nearly £30bn in income.

## Food service and pubs

Community-owned pubs, food coops and bakeries are a coop sector on the rise, now numbering close to 350 across the country. **Flo’s** in Oxford has become a much-loved gathering hub, with a cafe, refill shop, family activities and social events; the fact that it’s owned by the community has been central to its success. Produce markets, community pubs and shops also thrive in London, including **OrganicLea**, a food-growing coop that also works with schools and community centres.

## Energy and environment

Community recycling ventures and renewable energy coops are a growing sector, generating £57m in income nationwide. **Stokey Energy** in London turns local buildings into solar powerhouses; it was first launched by local residents seeking better prices for buying renewable energy.

## Digital

Tech coops, digital agencies and platform coops number nearly 150 across the country. One of them is **Outlandish**, a worker-owned coop based in London that takes a partnership approach to working with clients who share their goal of positive social impact.

## Arts and culture

The coop model is ideal for creative collectives and community arts spaces. The **Music Venue Trust** helps members put on gigs across the country, sharing tips on everything from selling tickets to running a bar, as well as lobbying on their behalf in an industry under pressure. The arts and culture sector generates nearly £15m in income for the overall UK economy, although the sector’s influence is likely even greater. After a group of locals persuaded the council and local stakeholders to join the cause, the **Jubilee Pool** in Cornwall is now boosting the town’s economic foundations as a tourist attraction.



## Driving positive change



A coop is an underused yet brilliant option for running a business that not only makes a healthy contribution to the UK economy but is also a force for good. It's a great way to generate revenues while also providing good jobs to good people, and create something everyone involved can be proud of.

For more guidance on how a coop model could benefit your business, contact Grow London Local. [Co-operatives UK](#) can also help you connect with information and support, offering advice on everything from membership development to HR and finance.

**Wondering if a cooperative is right for you?**

[Book a consultation with a Business Support Manager](#) for dedicated support.