

Global Co-operative Coaching and Mentoring Program – Preliminary Report

On behalf of our co-operative's board of directors and myself I wish to thank everyone (well over two dozen folks) who took the time to give their thoughts and suggestions in regards to our queries about the concept for the above program.

I also wish to indicate that we have had a very positive response to our initial query. Of the persons we contacted, roughly 80% took time to respond, many of you at some length and in some considerable detail. For us, this type of response rate was a very strong indication of the interest on the part of those who had been approached. Responses have been received from across Canada, Mexico, the USA, as well as from Europe, Asia, and Africa. While none of the responses were negative, some pointed out important factors that would have to be considered, such as avoiding competing with other existing programs, and organizations, as well as recognizing that in many cases those in need of such a program are also the one least able to pay for it themselves. One person did feel we should not offer a mentoring program, but the exact reason for suggesting this remains unclear. We will want to follow up in any case.

We also spoke at length with a person from one organization that has been providing a free mentoring program for some seven years, as well as a professional coach who has been successfully providing personal effectiveness and character based management coaching on a fee basis for some five years. Both of their inputs were very helpful to us in considering some of the many aspects that must be taken into consideration in designing and operating such a program. We also heard from some past coaches!

In addition, a large number of online coaching sites were reviewed, as were trends in the delivery of such programs. A copy of one recent industry level report is attached for your information. Finally, both I and some of our board members participated in a 5 hour long online educational program intended to give guidance to anyone on how to go about establishing a new coaching program.

On March 11, 2016 our board of directors met to review the input and feedback received. Everyone agreed that there was a real potential for some form of coaching and mentoring program for co-operatives, both nationally and internationally. This potential was not just based upon the inputs received but was also based upon the experiences of our co-operative in providing such services on an ad hoc informal basis globally over more than three years. Two more difficult questions remain, that is how to best organize such a program, and also how it might be designed so it can be self-sustaining over time. At that same meeting I was asked together with input from our president (which I have done) to draft up my thoughts on how such a program might be created and delivered.

Briefly my early and still incomplete thoughts are as follows:

- A program should operate globally, with opportunities for coaching within nations and regions as well as internationally and across regions. (thus co-operators involved from many locations)
- A program must be both efficient and effective in helping to support the development of co-operative forms of enterprise. (thus the use of technologies, and ways for gauging success)
- Co-operative coaching and mentoring is a two-way street. All participants be they coaches or learners need to derive benefits from their involvement in such a program. (mutual benefits)

- There appears to be two potential streams of users: those involved in co-operative leadership and management, and those involved in selected and more specialized business functions such as commercial lending, factory production, or consumer retail services.
- To be sustainable there will need to be sources of long term income to offset the various expenses involved, as well as ongoing support for the program by the various professionals and volunteer persons involved. (thus some parts of the program would be free, some at very little costs, and others with fees competitive within the broader marketplace)
- We should strive to link and as appropriate partner with other co-operative development organizations having interest in our program or already having similar or related programs.
- Some tentative Co-operative Coaching 'example areas of focus' might include: Enterprise Risk Management, Starting A Co-operative, Using Strategic Planning Processes, Challenges in Leading and Managing a Federation, Steps in Selecting a Banking Technology Platform, Creating an Effective Government Relations Program, Using Interest-Based Planning for Member Engagement in Your Co-operative, and Re-designing Your Democratic Control Structure.
- Finally, the potential and the need as I see it extends across all types of co-operative enterprises: from those just starting out as grass roots enterprises, to mature and developed co-operative organizations, at both the local, federation or national association level, and in developed and developing settings. (thus we must look carefully at where to start small and expand as we go)
- We expect there may well be different levels of service, and delivery channels. For example:
 - o Global Interactive Co-operative Coaches' HelpDesk / Chat Services for co-operative leaders and managers (free)
 - o Internet inventory of qualified co-operative coaches and mentors (some standards and guidelines will need to be created and there may be a small setup fee for new coaches)
 - o Internet online or phone real time 1 on 1 coaching / mentoring service (some free and / or with a modest fee)
 - o Internet, phone, in person, or some combination of general or specialized technical coaching or consulting (competitive fees)
- The delivery channels will also need to include access via smart phones and other devices.
- There will also need to be a means for gauging the effectiveness and value of services being provided within an overall program. We might start with a simple "Likes [UpVote] or Unlikes [DownVote]" feature, and later expand to include service reviews.

These are all very initial thoughts on what we might begin with in terms of an overall program. Our next steps will be to think through how we might, once we have a more detailed program in mind, engage with any of the various co-operative organizations, development groups, and professionals who might wish to work with us in this initiative.

We think this initiative is one of the most innovative and exciting co-operative developments ideas to come forward in some time! Therefore, if we wish to do things right, and we do, we also expect that logically this may take us a little time to get up and running!

If YOU might like to be involved with this work with your ideas and suggestions, then please let any of our directors, or me know by email (terry.macdonald@co-operativeenterprise.coop), and we will be in touch shortly. Otherwise we will send you occasional email updates as to our progress. Thanks again!

Prepared by: Terry MacDonald, Managing Director GCDG - March 18, 2016