



From Hives to Wealth  
Building the Wallowa Beekeepers Cooperative

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# Bees As Infrastructure

- Bees support agriculture: Crops & ranches
- Essential to food systems
- Foundational to rural economies

# The Challenge

- High startup costs
- Individual limits on scale, market access, income stability
- Declining pollinators
- Rising costs
- Rural dollars leaving the community

# What If we could . . .

- Lower barriers to entry?
- Balance supply & demand?
- Retain value locally?
- Strengthen community bonds?

# Why a Cooperative?

- Shared resources & infrastructure
- Pool knowledge & labor
- Harness collective buying power
- Local ownership - benefits distributed among the beekeepers doing the work

# How It Started

- Community conversations
- Producers sharing notes
- Founding members
- Shared vision
- Start small with a shoestring budget

# Early Milestones

1. Initial funding goal: exceeded
2. Inaugural Honey Sale: sold out
3. Pre-Season Collective Equipment & Supply "Group Buy"
  - First-time beekeeper support & cost savings
  - Initial inventory of time-critical supplies for resale throughout the season

# First Year of Operation

Category	Expense	Income
Capital		\$4,516
Startup	\$870	
Taxes	\$468	

Business Line	Income
Honey Sale	\$962
Equipment/Supplies	\$743
Seeds	\$73

Beginning Bank Balance	\$0	Ending Bank Balance	\$4,287.30
2026 Budget to Preserve Founding Capital			\$762.30

# Economic Impact: The Multiplier Effect

## Direct

- New income streams
- Supports small scale producers
- Lower barriers

## Indirect

- Improved crop yields
- Strengthens local food system
- Stronger local economy

# Keeping Value Local

- Local production
- Local processing
- Local branding

Local Ownership Model

Keeps local \$\$ circulating and builds resilience

# Help Along the Way

Expect challenge: Expert technical support is extremely valuable

- The Honey Cooperative
- Blue Mountain Small Business Administration
- NE Oregon Economic Development District
- NW Cooperative Development Center
- [START.coop](http://START.coop)

# The Future

- More members
- More hives
- 9 adjoining counties in OR, WA, ID
- Value-added products
- Agritourism - Honey Tasting - Local pollination Contracts



# Closing Thoughts

Small-scale cooperation creates lasting wealth.

Sometimes the smallest systems – like bees – can have the biggest impact.

