

A young sapling with several green leaves is growing out of a bed of dark forest floor litter, including twigs and moss. The background is a dense forest with tall, thin trees and dappled sunlight filtering through the canopy, creating a bokeh effect. The entire scene is framed by a large white circle.

SEED COMMONS

IMPACT REPORT

2020



Linda Diaz | Worker-Owner, Brooklyn Stone and Tile

PEER MEMBER: THE WORKING WORLD, NYC

Twenty-twenty was truly a year like no other. It was a year of extraordinary loss and suffering, of injustice and fear. **It was also a year of visionary resistance and resilience.**

2020 pointed to a future that is, and must be, different than our past. And in places across the country, people did more than imagine that future, they began to build it.

In this report, you'll find stories from across Seed Commons of people working in community, building together for a more just and resilient future. Despite weathering one of the worst economic crises in generations, not a single cooperative business in our network closed. Instead, our member organizations invested millions of dollars in cooperatives across the country. Not only did our network not shrink, we added new members - and those members created new partnerships and gave birth to new regenerative projects.

Interest in investing in a different economy hit an all time high in 2020, and Seed Commons brought in more investors and dollars than any other year in our history. In this report, you'll read stories of struggle, but you'll also find the stories of our strength - both the strength of the network as a whole and of the individuals and communities who make it up.

We believe that building a more just and sustainable economy is the most important work we can do. Seed Commons has bold plans to grow our network and expand our capacity across the country to meet the scale of the change that is needed. Please join us, our network of support is always open to those fighting for a better world.



Flequer Vera | Worker-Owner, Sustainergy

PEER MEMBER: COOP CINCY, CINCINNATI

WHO WE ARE

Seed Commons is a complete reimagining of finance and lending.

We are a cooperatively-governed national Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) whose peer members are grassroots organizations that work to enrich their communities rather than extract wealth from them. We work together to leverage the power of big finance to support worker cooperatives and other community-based initiatives.

We practice non-extractive financing.

We ask for no collateral. We don't run credit checks. And we take no repayment unless your business is successful. Yet our investments have one of the highest return rates in the industry.

We decentralize our distribution of capital.

Since each organization in our network is part of the community it serves, we're able to put capital into the hands of the people who need it the most and who can do the most with it.

We centralize the acquisition of capital.

We share a common pool of capital, we share our infrastructure, and we make decisions collectively. We help each other make smart investments and we hold each other accountable to our values.

We finance worker cooperatives.

Democracy should extend to the economic realm. When workers own the business, they have a stake in the success or failure of the project.

The United States economy is in a crisis right now.

The existing models are serving even fewer people than they used to. More and more people are realizing that they don't want to return to the old world. They want something new.

We, collectively, can build something new.



Members of our Southern Reparations Loan Fund Regional Network

Seed Commons is a national financial cooperative composed of **peer members spread across the United States.**

We started this financial cooperative in 2015 with nine community-led organizations staffed mostly by volunteers. Today we have 26 peer members, with more slated to join in 2021, we've collectively raised and shared between us over \$2M to support local fund operations and staff time, and we've raised over \$20M for our financing pool. 2020, despite the global pandemic, was no exception to this trajectory. In New York, The Working World dramatically expanded its reach by creating a network of traditional business developers and training them to support cooperative conversions, a feat that was the center in an unprecedented mayoral launch of support for worker-ownership. In Baltimore, BRED doubled their staff capacity, thanks to a partnership with the city of Baltimore, and launched a city-wide cooperative conversions pilot. With three completed conversions and counting, BRED - which is worker-led - has become one of the most productive peer members in our cooperative. Coop Cincy and Detroit Community Wealth Fund both launched major employee ownership campaigns that will continue to grow in 2021. In Asheville, PODER Emma secured over \$1M of real estate in a rapidly gentrifying area, creating multiple resident-owned mobile home parks and an accompanying real estate cooperative. And in Los Angeles, the LA Coop Lab launched a self-paced online cooperative curriculum that far exceeds anything else we have seen in its creativity and accessibility. Every day our peer members are growing and pushing the boundaries of what's possible, and we couldn't be more excited for what will come in 2021.

OUR MEMBERS



OUR IMPACT

Our locally anchored members ensure that our investments are deployed where they can have the most impact.

15.3M

actively deployed
or committed loans to worker-owned or community-owned cooperatives, as of March 2021

4.8M

in new loans
to worker-owned and community-controlled enterprises since January 1, 2020



SEAN SMEETON, VINCENT GREEN, DETRIC MCCOY, MIKE PROKOP,

95%

of our loans are made to Black & POC-owned businesses or women-owned businesses

84%

of our portfolio is invested in communities of color
on a dollar for dollar basis

100%

of our cooperatives
successfully navigated the COVID-19 pandemic, remaining open amidst tremendous challenges

Against all odds, 2020 was a growth year for Seed Commons and our co-ops.

OUR GROWTH



26

member funds

across the country, independently governed by local organizers, using a shared backbone

10.8M

in new investment

into our community-controlled capital pool to fund future loans, as of March 2021

& KOWFI DORFMAN-EL | WORKER-OWNERS, TAHARKA BROTHERS ICE CREAM - PEER MEMBER: BRED

27.7M

total assets

held by Seed Commons, as of March 2021

23.2M

investment pool

shared by our 26 peer members across the country, as of March 2021

3M

in relief funds

secured to support our cooperatives through the COVID-19 pandemic

Over

3000

workers employed in 50+
cooperatives around the
country (part-time and
full-time)

\$85,000,000

IN GROSS REVENUE EARNED BY OUR COOPERATIVES



Najee Haynes-Follins, worker-owner of Red Emma's Bookstore Coffeehouse

PEER MEMBER: BALTIMORE ROUNDTABLE FOR ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

The story of 2020 is the story of **cooperation** and **resiliency.**

When the economy in the US shut down during the spring, businesses had to make hard decisions about how to pivot in face of change. We saw more interest from more workplaces - from owners and workers alike - in cooperatization, and our peer members are working to convert more businesses than ever before to workplace democracy. And no wonder: outside the workplace, so many of us learned just how much we rely on one another to meet our basic needs. When the workers run their own business, they can weather change far better than traditional single-owner businesses. Hard decisions, like which staff can stay on and face risks, can be made with the input of those who are affected.

That's not to say that the co-ops we support didn't suffer along with the rest of the economy, but we're proud to say not a single one of our dozens of cooperatives shut their doors for good in 2020. In 2021, we're going to see many more open their doors for the first time.

OUR CO-OPS



Beth Robinette and Brian Estes, worker-owners of LINC Foods

SUPPORTED BY THE WORKING WORLD / LINC COOPERATIVE FUND



FOOD SYSTEM

Our food system coops have shown incredible resilience in a difficult year.

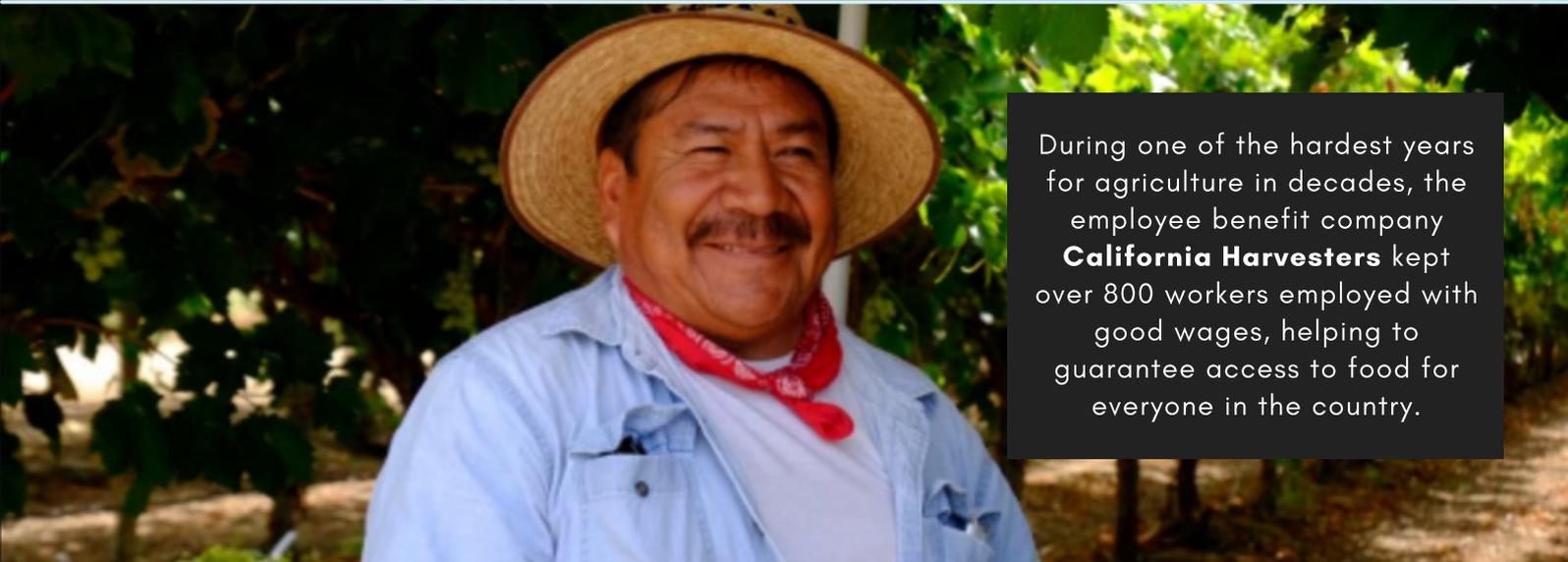
They adapted to a new food distribution environment and both stayed afloat and helped provide for their communities.



In Baltimore, **Taharka Brothers Ice Cream** made a rapid pivot from wholesale to home delivery, investing heavily in marketing and branding and a new ordering app. The cooperative, which became fully worker-owned in December 2020, finished the year with record sales.



In Brooklyn, the **Brooklyn Packers** provided home delivery of fresh produce to customers while still finding the time and resources to team up with mutual aid organizations to provide 2,000 boxes of fresh food to families in need.



During one of the hardest years for agriculture in decades, the employee benefit company **California Harvesters** kept over 800 workers employed with good wages, helping to guarantee access to food for everyone in the country.



BUILDING TRADES

Manufacturing is one the pillars of a strong economy.

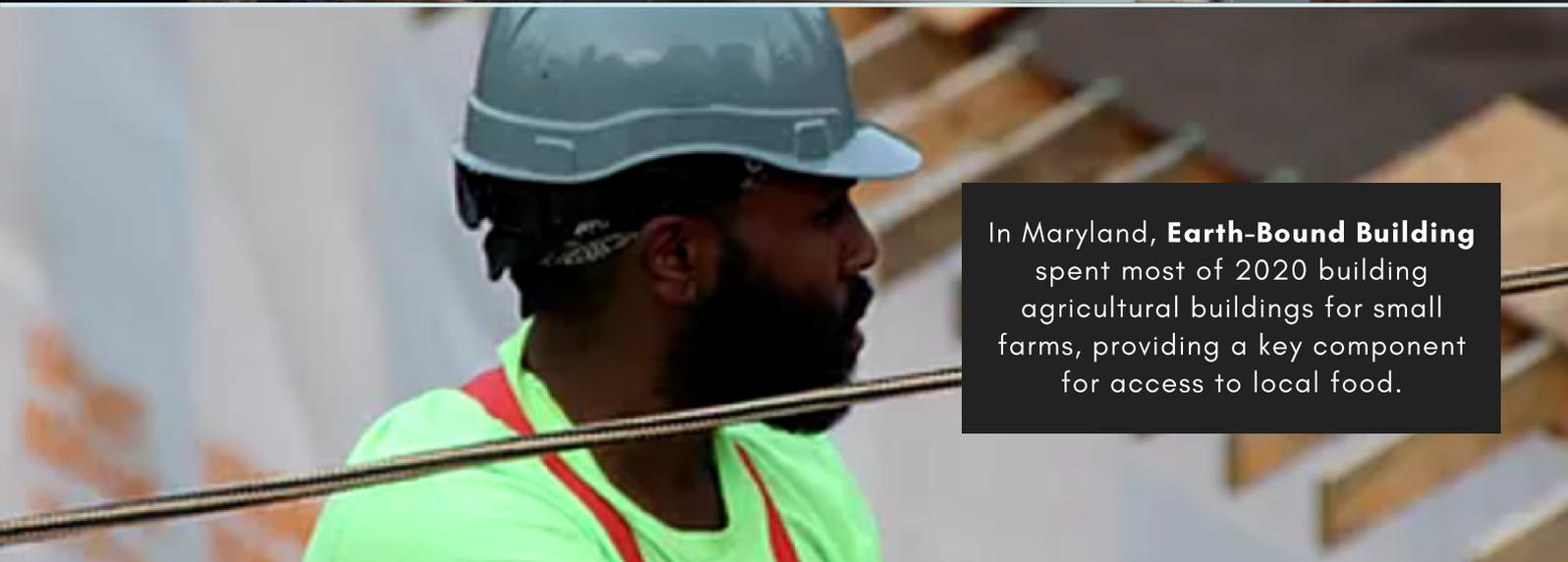
Cooperative ownership means that it is the people themselves who control that pillar.



In Chicago, **New Era Windows** has continued to grow every single year, even during 2020. Their workers make twice what they made before they became owners of their own factory.



With two years of cooperative ownership under their belts, the worker-owners of **Brooklyn Stone & Tile** were able to pivot to a leaner business model for the pandemic while still providing for themselves.



In Maryland, **Earth-Bound Building** spent most of 2020 building agricultural buildings for small farms, providing a key component for access to local food.



SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

**Bicycle cooperatives
provide affordable, all-
ages transport.**

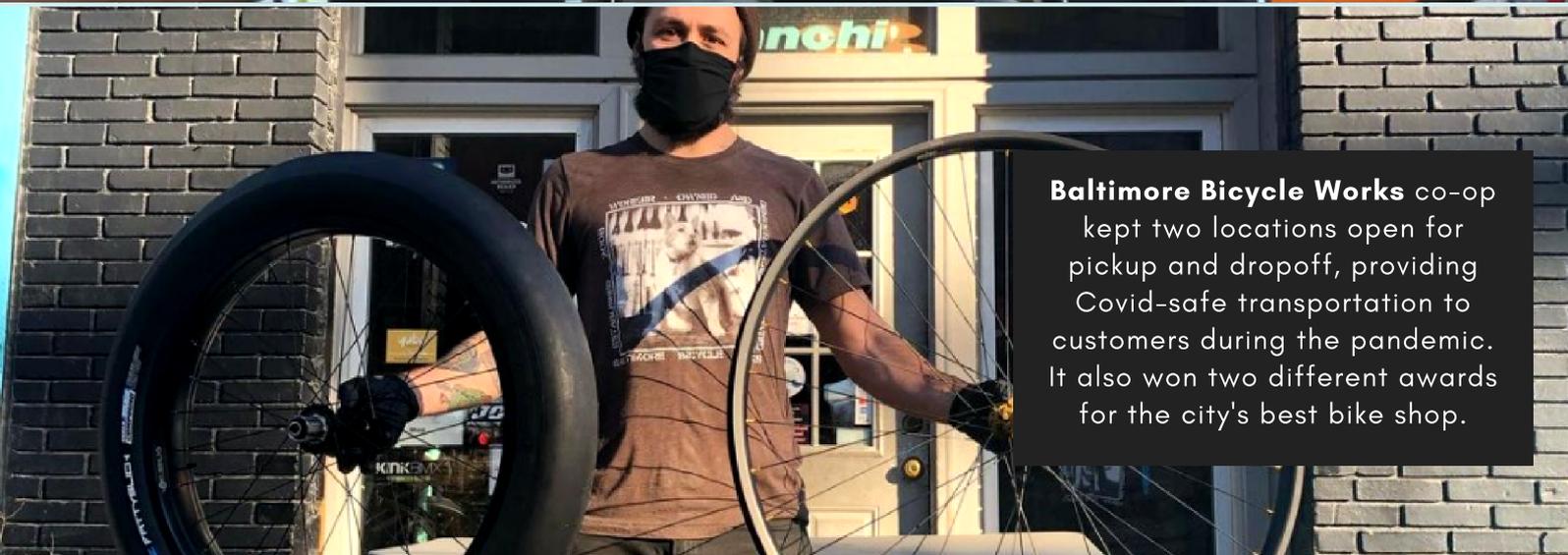
In a year of isolation, mobility became even more valuable.



In Richmond, California, **Rich City Rides** ran multiple community programs, including teaming up with firefighters and a bicycle manufacturer to get more than a hundred free bikes into the hands of neighborhood kids.



In Los Angeles, **Ride On!** saw tremendous growth as a Black-owned business in Leimert Park, Los Angeles, launching a zero-emissions program, offering electric bike and neighborhood electric vehicle trainings to local hires.



Baltimore Bicycle Works co-op kept two locations open for pickup and dropoff, providing Covid-safe transportation to customers during the pandemic. It also won two different awards for the city's best bike shop.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

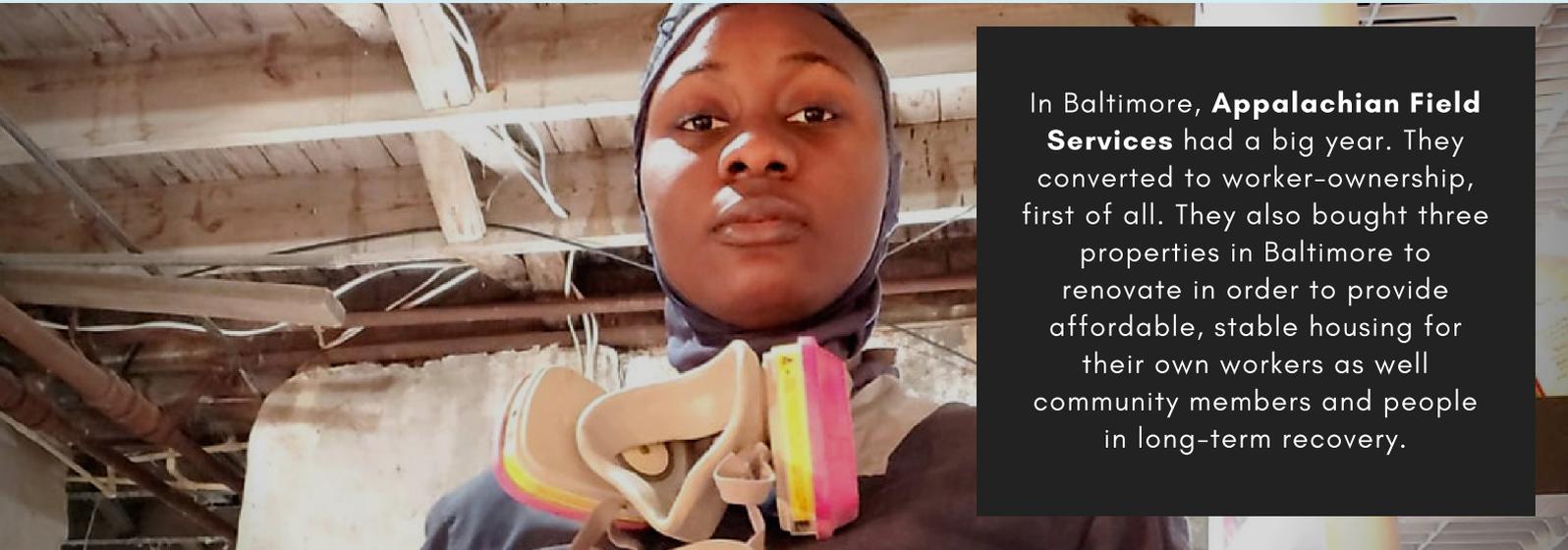


During this economic crisis, our housing cooperatives have risen to the occasion.

As an unprecedented wave of evictions sweeps across the country, cooperative ownership offers stability and affordability.



In Asheville, the real estate cooperative **Mahetsi** purchased a mobile home park to provide stable, secure, and affordable housing for an immigrant community in one of the fastest-gentrifying cities in the US. In total, there are 48 units of permanently affordable housing in our peer member **PODER Emma's** cooperative housing network.



In Baltimore, **Appalachian Field Services** had a big year. They converted to worker-ownership, first of all. They also bought three properties in Baltimore to renovate in order to provide affordable, stable housing for their own workers as well community members and people in long-term recovery.



In Detroit, the Black and POC-owned **Brick and Mortar** cooperative welcomed new members into their co-op.

OUR GOALS

2021-2022

A **\$40 million investment fund** serving our national cooperative of peer members

\$3M annual operating budget shared between our national backbone and our peer members

Double the number of full voting members

15 full members
10 lending members
5 apprentice members
5 incoming members

\$30 million actively invested in cooperative enterprises



seedcommons.org
investing@seedcommons.org

SEED COMMONS

A COMMUNITY WEALTH COOPERATIVE