



Cooperative Leaders and Scholars (CLS) Program FAQ

What is CLS?

CLS builds capacity and support networks for new and emerging co-op leaders and scholars. The program provides an opportunity to participate in multi-sector programming and events, and to engage with co-op industry thought leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders. This community empowers and trains its members to build a more inclusive economy in North America, together.

Who is eligible to apply?

Applicants must reside in North America and either be pursuing a career in, working with, or having an interest in cooperatives, credit unions, or mutual insurance in one or more of the following categories: 1) an emerging cooperator (ages 18 - 35), 2) an individual with fewer than 5 years of experience in these spaces, 3) a post secondary student of any age.

What does CLS achieve?

CLS attracts, engages, and retains talent in the co-op community; deepens and broadens knowledge of cooperatives; provides training for the next generation of leaders; and brings together cooperators from every sector to foster cross-sectoral relationships, support networks, and collaboration early in their careers.

What is the cost of the program?

CDF and NCBA CLUSA provide scholarships to accepted applicants. Scholarships include registration fees for NCBA CLUSA's Co-op IMPACT Conference, CDF's Cooperative Hall of Fame, and a short course from the international Centre for Co-operative Management at Saint Mary's University. Scholarships also include a \$1,000 travel stipend, shared accommodations, and meals for two in-person gatherings, as well as exclusive networking events and webinars from industry experts.

How many people are accepted annually?

Each cohort is a maximum of 20 people depending on availability of scholarship funds.

Can my workplace sponsor my participation?

Yes! Up to five slots are reserved for sponsored participants. Sponsored participants will still be required to qualify under the program's eligibility criteria and complete an application.

What is the duration of the program?

CLS is an 8-month program that begins in April and concludes in November. Programming includes monthly webinars and two in-person events held in April and October.

When are webinars scheduled and for how long?

Webinars are two hours long and typically fall on the third Wednesday of each month. Webinar dates include: April 2, May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20, September 17, November 19, and December 10. The webinars on May 21 and September 17 are joint workshops with CLS alumni and will last three hours.

When are the in-person events scheduled and where?

The in-person events will be held in Raleigh, North Carolina from April 21 - 24 and Washington, DC from October 5 - 10.

Can I participate if I can't attend the in-person events?

Building community with cohort members is an important component of CLS. We require all applicants to participate in both in-person events to foster relationships.

Who is invited to webinars and in-person events?

Some webinars will be exclusively for the cohort, but two sessions will include CLS alumni. In-person events may also include CLS alumni participation.

What is a capstone project?

The culmination of the CLS program is a capstone project that can be completed individually or in a small group. Participants select projects based on several parameters, including alignment with the NCBA CLUSA lines of work, as well as relevance to the participants' own cooperative work and personal interests. CLS staff work with the cohort to develop the capstone projects, connecting participants with cooperative information, experts, and organizations - within and outside of their sector and geography - that can provide critical insight and valuable connections to enhance project success and advance participants' networks and professional development.

Will there be a time for us to ask questions about CLS?

Yes! CLS staff will host virtual information sessions on January 15 and 29. Potential applicants are also welcome to contact Kirstie Boyette at kboyette@ncba.coop.

When are applications due?

Applications are due on February 3 at 11:59pm EST. Applicants will be notified of their status on February 14.