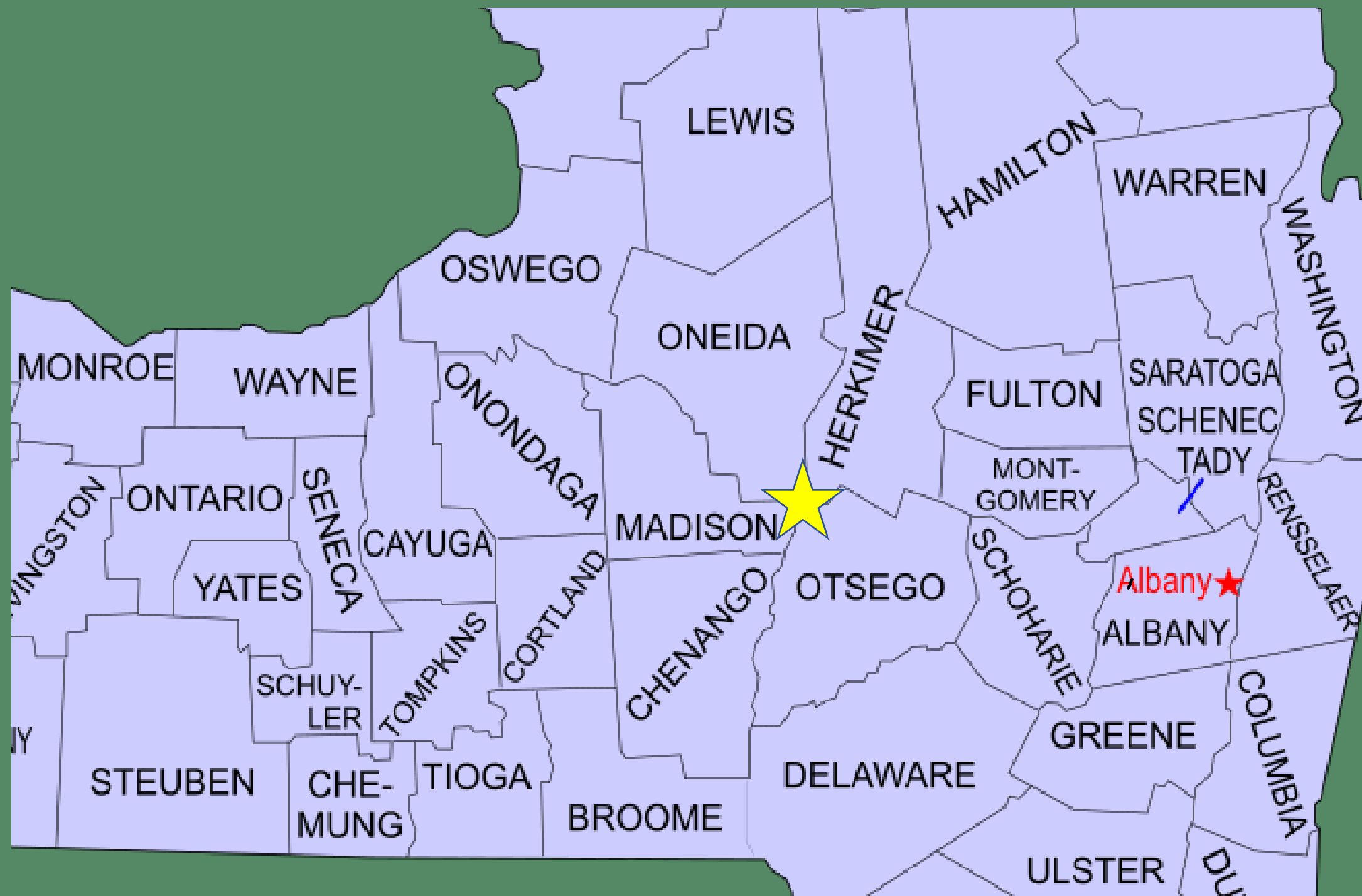


A Grocery Store Owned by its Customers: The Development of 4-Corners Food Co-op



What is a Food Co-op?

A **food cooperative** or **food co-op** is a food distribution outlet organized as a cooperative, rather than a private or public company. Food cooperatives are usually consumer cooperatives, where the decisions regarding the production and distribution of its food are chosen by its members. Like all cooperatives, food cooperatives are often based on the 7 Rochdale Principles and they typically offer natural foods.

Why here?

As grocery stores and markets shut down along the Route 20 corridor, a vast food desert appeared. Despite abundant farms in the area, there is a disconnect between producers and customers. 4-Corners Food Co-op seeks to build a grocery store, lying at the intersection of 4 counties (Madison, Herkimer, Oneida, and Otsego). The store will be a convenient, one-stop shop with a focus on local farms and fresh groceries. This will help to close the existing gap in their community food system.

Benefits

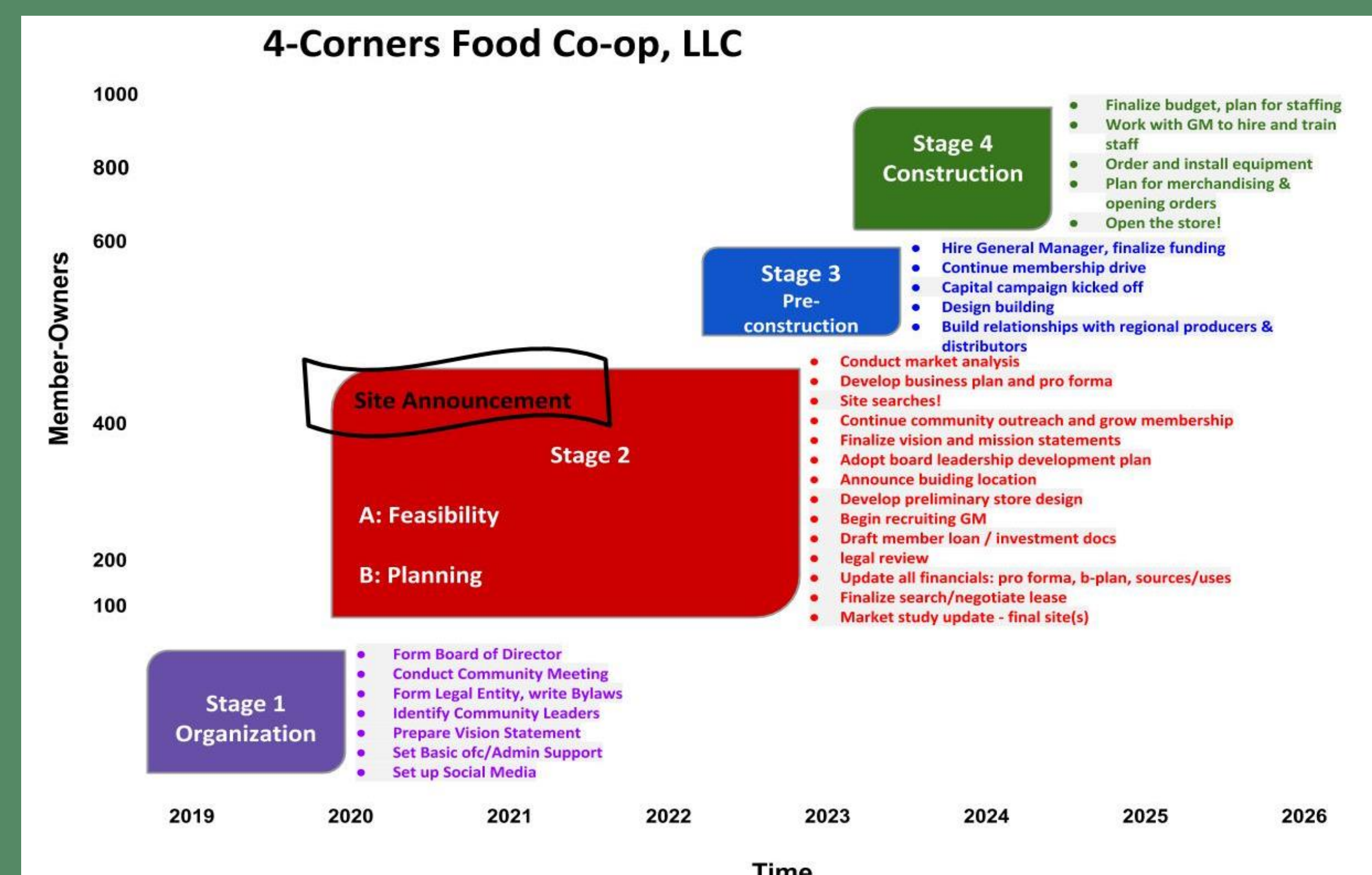
- Support local businesses and community members (customers and vendors)
- Increases resilience and independence within community
- Easier access to fresh groceries
- Foster community relations

Engagement Strategies

- Social media outreach
- Postcard mailers (also in public spaces, e.g. library, post office)
- Membership campaigns & fundraisers
- Website development
- Merchandise fundraiser (branded bags, hats, shirts, etc.)

Covid-19 Solutions

- Locally-produced food tastings
- Membership events in the park
- Tag-a-friend Lawn Blitz campaign
- Virtual cooking classes
- Virtual gardening workshops



Conclusion and Future Thoughts

The 4-Corners Food Co-op is in a prime position to continue developing their organization. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many to look within their communities for support, which reinforces that connecting local producers and consumers is as critical and relevant as ever before. Moving forward, the co-op will benefit from consistent effort on part of the committee, at least until enough members have joined. This will ensure an even workload balance and prevent burnout.

The Committee should also maintain regular social media and e-mail communications to engage with current and potential members. Occasional paper mailings may also be sent to ensure proper full audience reach. A Social Media Manager should be appointed to oversee this (e.g. future internship).