

Know your Co-op!

An introduction to the history, structure, and funding
model of the Media Co-op

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Introduction: Why learn about the Media Co-op?

This document will trace the emergence of the Media Co-op from its start as a newspaper in 2003, through to its reformation and expansion, which have allowed it to flourish in today's localized, social media-saturated environment.

The project that became known as the Media Co-op began as *The Dominion Newspaper* in 2003. The inception and evolution of the project is examined in the next section.

In 2003, Indymedia, a loose network of non-professional media outlets, was active in some Canadian cities and regions. Indymedia had exploded onto the internet and into activist communities during the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, and expanded into a worldwide network in its first two years. The combination of rapid growth and network-wide emphasis on absolute freedom to post meant that four years after its inception, Indymedia quality was hit-and-miss. The activists and thinkers behind *The Dominion* had in some cases been involved in the Indymedia network, but wanted to develop a more journalistic model while taking inspiration from Indymedia radical democracy.

We started small, with critical coverage of issues completely ignored by Canadian and international media. *The Dominion's* readership developed mainly online. By 2007, the newspaper had about 100 paid subscribers and thousands of online readers. We had covered stories that no other media touched, like Canada's role in the *coup d'etat* in Haiti and a variety of grassroots social movements, but our capacity was not increasing at the same rate as the growing need for coverage of these stories. We were relying heavily on volunteer labour to keep our daily operations going, and it was not sustainable.

We realized that our already-disadvantaged position as an independent, grassroots-oriented publication was not going to grow quickly enough to make the impact we were looking for if we stuck to a traditional publishing business model. So we decided to invent a new model for news coverage: a media co-op.

The transformation from a small, traditional magazine to Canada's first modern media co-operative has required a great deal of resources and support from readers, contributors, experts, and allies from across the country and internationally. This transformation is examined in careful detail in the second section of this document.

Today, four locals of the Media Co-op network operate from coast to coast, and many of our operations have been successfully decentralized. This co-operative model has given us a lot of room to expand. Even as we face organizational and financial challenges, we continue to be encouraged by our growing membership, which increasingly participates in major decisions, from what issues we cover to our budget priorities. A financial breakdown from 2010-11, as well as an explanation of some of the opportunities and hurdles we are facing as we continue to spread the network, can be found in the third section of this booklet.

A recurring question as we've worked on *The Dominion* and organized the Media Co-op has been around the matter of bias. By avoiding running a deluge of leftist opinion pieces and striving to employ a baseline of journalistic form and ethics, we've attempted to keep our coverage as professional as possible.

That said, since the early days of *The Dominion* and until now, editors and contributors have used grassroots journalism as tool to encourage the production of meaningful writing and analysis. "Where mainstream media makes false claims of 'balanced' and 'unbiased' coverage, *The Dominion* is explicit about its bias: we are biased towards the perspectives of those most affected by events, government policy and corporate activity," read an early edition of *The Dominion's* website.

Building long term, independent media presents a myriad of challenges. Like many other alternative and independent media organizations, we began as a group of people focused on producing content. Eight years later, the energy that went into figuring out what stories to cover has shifted toward discussions about our organizational forms and processes, our funding model, member outreach and administrative tasks, as well as editorial guidance and training to budding grassroots journalists and editors.

Some of these dynamics, which are profoundly shaping the Media Co-op, are examined in the concluding section of this guide, as are some of the amazing opportunities and possibilities that have been opened up through the tireless work of Media Co-op members.

With that, we invite you to read on, and learn about what we consider to be one of the most important independent media initiatives in Canada today.

History of the Media Co-op

In order to understand the Media Co-op today, we need to explore the publication preceded it: *The Dominion*. In what follows, we'll look at some of the personal and political dynamics that contributed to the formation of what was then a monthly news magazine, and document the transition from the original project into what is today a countrywide co-operative media network.

The Dominion originated in the rich ferment of complaints about the right-wing nature of Canada's two "national newspapers" at the time: *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*. A recent graduate and former editor of a student paper, Dru Oja Jay, had heard one too many laments about the lack of a left-wing national newspaper. The only problem: there was no money available to start such a project.

While still working in the student press, Jay started to think about how to get around the need for massive resources. In February 2002, he formulated a proposal and sent it to Canadian University Press (CUP), an association of (at the time) English-language student newspapers across Canada. The plan included an online news web site featuring a PDF edition that could be downloaded and printed locally. The proposal read, in part:

“Assuming we can eventually get a professional-looking web site that is frequently updated off the ground, and build up a sizeable audience, and keep promoting it (a big assumption, no doubt), we'd then start inviting other independent sources of news, analysis, arts, sports coverage, commentary and comics to use our web site to post their best (and most nationally relevant) stuff. The site, in addition to being a clearinghouse for quality stuff by CUP member papers, could feature other independently produced content from the likes of Indymedia and what's left of independently run newspapers, and feature a comprehensive set of links to independent Canadian media. Having gained a large enough audience, the site could be a draw for writers in and of itself.”

A year later, this proposal would morph into *The Dominion*.

Jay recruited a small group of volunteer editors and contributors to write for a slim bi-weekly newspaper, which would also be published online in PDF format. Among them was Hillary Lindsay, who began as editor of the Environment section, and would later join the *Dominion* editorial collective.

“What we set out to do with *The Dominion* is provide a basic level of information about what Canada is up to in the world and what powerful forces within Canada are doing,” says Jay, reflecting back on the early days. The desire to fill an information void pushed early editions of *The Dominion* towards topics including Canadian foreign policy and settler-colonial relations in Canada, because according to Jay, these issues were either poorly covered or ignored in the mainstream.

From the beginning, *The Dominion* was a virtual organization, with readers and writers

alike spread across Canada and around the globe.

Published in May 2003, the first issue of *The Dominion* included a roundup of international news, a critique of the right wing Project for a New American Century, an article about corporate control over public forests, and a smattering of reviews and quotes from around the web. “*The Dominion* aims for more than to report the news with a left wing spin, to counteract the sensibilities of the businessmen and advertisers who run the vast majority of Canadian papers. What we’re after is to understand: not just that something is the case, but why. Surprisingly little journalism takes this imperative seriously,” reads a section of the paper’s first editorial.

From the outset the founders of *The Dominion* noted that they wanted to hear from readers and to run the project democratically, but the practice of building truly democratic media would take years to develop. As time went on, the paper's reach grew, increasing with each print run and online edition.

Coverage of the 2004 *coup d'état* in Haiti boosted readership, as journalists willing to break the corporate media silence about Canada’s support for a murderous, unelected regime found in the fledgling paper and news site one of the few venues in the country that took their work seriously.

In 2006, *The Dominion* published its fortieth issue, which was also its first special issue, devoted to Canadian foreign policy. 5,000 copies were distributed at launch events across Canada. At just three years old, the project already had a national reach.

As *The Dominion* grew, the limitations of the organizational model became apparent. The paper was still largely based on the traditional setup for alternative publications: a small, centralized group of barely-paid editors wrangling content from unpaid writers across the country.

The potential of burnout of dedicated staff together with the changing realities of online publishing pushed *Dominion* editors to think of new ways of structuring independent media. After a great deal of brainstorming with collective members and friends and allies in various movements, *The Dominion* re-incorporated as a multi-stakeholder co-operative in 2007.

Though the legal process to become a co-op is relatively straightforward, the organizational transformation required to operate as a co-operative is a multi-year process. Becoming a co-op means more than rebranding; it means restructuring and rethinking every element of media production and dissemination.

In 2008, collective members launched the “Own Your Media” initiative with a cross-Canada tour.

Involving readers, contributors and editors in decision making processes has required the

creation of innovative methods of group communication and interaction. It has also meant intensive work to bring local coverage into the fold, through the creation of “locals.” The Media Co-ops in Halifax (2009), Vancouver (2009), Toronto (2010) and Montreal (2011) form a network that makes up the central organization of the media co-op. Each local has an editorial collective that meets face-to-face to discuss stories and coverage in their cities and surrounding areas. Each local maintains its own website that feeds into the national Media Co-op network page.

The new model has required the creation of a web platform where contributors can upload news, videos, audio and photos, as well as interact through comments, working groups and discussions. By opening up the platform to participation from anyone and giving readers tools to evaluate the quality of information on the site, the Media Co-op has shed some of the main barriers to growth. A decentralized model based on co-operating locals and a national administrative and editorial collective allows for a potent combination of coordinated projects.

Perhaps the most difficult shift has been the attempt to bring readers into the fold not only as participants but also as owners of the Media Co-op.

“The idea of a media co-operative is that you’re not just a consumer or a customer, but you’re actually someone who is involved in every aspect of the Co-op, and there’s a sense that we’re all in this together,” says Jay.

Readers provide the essential funding base for the Co-op today with monthly pledges of between \$5 and \$100. In this sense the Media Co-op was also an early mover among media organizations seeking alternative funding models in a time of funding crisis for mainstream and alternative publications.

Through it all, the Media Co-op has continued to publish *The Dominion*. Special issues on the Alberta tar sands, the Canadian mining industry, the 2010 Olympics, the G20 and climate justice have given potent offline outreach tools to activist networks across the country.

Today, the Media Co-op locals have become an important source of content for *The Dominion*. Members of the Co-op recently decided that *The Dominion* would be printed only six times per year, shifting resources towards an actively expanding and innovative Media Co-op network.

Structure of the Media Co-op

The architecture of the Media Co-op is probably the most difficult part of the project to explain. The next section of this document describes the different components, communication flows, and decision-making structures that define the Media Co-op.

The reincorporation of The Dominion Newspaper Society as the Dominion Newspaper Co-operative represented our official transition from a society to a cooperative. What we today call the Media Co-op is formally incorporated as the “Dominion Newspaper Co-operative,” a rather confusing name that we don’t generally use with reference to anything except with regards to taxation.

The only change that occurred at the moment of the transition was for *The Dominion* magazine and website to formally become "projects" of the Media Co-op.

Incorporating as a multi-stakeholder co-op (also known as a solidarity co-op) requires the adoption of a comprehensive set of bylaws, and seek representation from each type of stakeholder. In our case, the member types are readers, contributors, and editor. Each is represented on the board of directors. The board of directors was only minimally active through the first two years of the co-op, but activity is increasing.

A small grant provided to organizations transitioning towards being co-operatively run helped with the process of getting these bylaws drawn up and functioning. But by and large little changed in the day-to-day operations after we incorporated as a Co-op.

The Own Your Media tour, which took Media Co-op delegates across Canada for an 18-city tour was our first public push to establish a nationwide Media Co-op. Audiences were presented with the Media Co-op idea, and asked to support it by becoming sustaining members. By the end of the tour, the nascent Media Co-op had signed up 50 sustainers.

Around the same time, a significant amount of work was devoted to designing a new web interface where users could create profiles and upload stories, videos, images, blogs and events. The new Media Co-op site was launched in April 2008.

In January 2009, the first local of the Media Co-op was launched in Halifax. Halifax was a natural choice for the first local, given the organization’s history in Atlantic Canada including the fact that at the time, *The Dominion* had more subscribers in proportion to population in Halifax than anywhere else in the country.

Following the launch of the Halifax Media Co-op, locals were launched in Vancouver (September, 2009), Toronto (February, 2010) and Montréal (February 2011).

Each local has followed a different course of development, but some similarities span the organization.

For instance, each local was organized by people who had previously been involved with *The Dominion*. Each local was also required to kick off with a minimum amount of start-up fund (in the range of \$500) and a process of outreach to relevant community groups and existing independent media. Each local has a unique URL, (e.g. vancouver.mediacoop.ca) that feeds into the common mediacoop.ca site.

Unlike in Halifax, in Vancouver and Toronto mega-events became cause for fast and furious local organizing. In Vancouver, the winter Olympics, which took place in February 2010, became a catalyst for pulling together a local collective and creating a common space for media makers in town to cover resistance to the Olympics. In Toronto, the onus to organize a Toronto Media Co-op came with the announcement that the G20 summit would be held in the city's downtown. Independent media makers in Toronto organized to host as many local journalists as possible, putting them up in a garage they had secured as an alternative media center. Both collectives hosted and vouched for journalists that came from throughout the US and Canada during these mega-events.

Montréal, the newest local, faces additional challenges as it attempts to provide a bilingual online space for activist reports and journalism.

Communication generally flows between the locals and what we have sometimes called the "central" Media Co-op. This refers to paid or contracted staff who tend to network wide administrative and outreach work. Through emails and phone calls they do most of the editorial and coordination work on *The Dominion*. Locals have to date been set up by longtime Dominion contributors and editors and while this has allowed for an efficient dynamic amongst the network's bottom-liners, it could become a barrier for the transfer of know-how to future Media Co-op organizers who may not share such implicit understanding of the organization.

Once established, locals have been granted autonomy over local decisions within the existing shared framework and values of the Media Co-op network.

We aim to be a non-hierarchical network. We collectively set a baseline of minimum requirements that locals and collectives must meet, but decisions concerning strictly local affairs (for example, editorial decisions on a local web site) cannot be made without the consent of the local.

Sustaining members of the co-op who live in areas with a local support that local with 50 per cent of their pledged funds. (The other 50 per cent supports the network as a whole.)

An incipient formal structure for communication between locals and the network-level staff -- a spokescouncil -- is made up of delegates from each local who exchange ideas and discuss policy proposals via conference call before taking those policy proposals back to local collectives for final approval.

Each local has a distinct structure; some have separate editorial and open collectives, and others function more informally.

A crucial element of being a multi-stakeholder co-op is that major decisions must involve our membership. Starting in 2010, we initiated mechanisms for consulting Media Co-op membership on some major decisions.

In determining priorities for the 2011-12 budget, Media Co-op members were presented with ten priority areas and asked to rate their importance and add comments. These ratings then formed the basis for a participatory budget committee, including the elected board and representatives from locals to decide on a final budget plan.

Media Co-op members were asked to propose potential topics for the 2011 special issue. An area of the web site enabled members to rate and discuss each proposal.

Most recently, a proposal to reduce the print run of *The Dominion* from eight to six issues per year was recently approved after members were asked for feedback online, and subscribers were sent requests for feedback via post.

Most of the back-end work of these consultations is carried out by “central” or contracted staff people who create the questions, design the surveys and ensure that even our readers who are not regular internet users have a chance to participate.

Financial Foundations of the Media Co-op

The struggle to remain on strong financial footing is one of the least glamorous and most important parts of growing strong, sustainable independent media. This section looks at our funding model, and matches future funding needs to projected growth outcomes.

Like many other aspiring media projects, *The Dominion* was launched as a purely volunteer initiative, with more attention paid to the political content of the paper than to the business model. In the early days, collective members used donated photocopies and borrowed time to make the paper happen.

Early on, the odd grant made it possible for volunteer editors to invest more time in organizational work, but most work went unpaid, from journalism to the growing pile of administrative tasks.

When *The Dominion* was reincorporated as a co-operative, the collective was able to access a variety of grants aimed specifically at transitioning towards co-operative models of organization.

These initial monies became the seed funding that allowed the growing editorial collective to hash out a more serious business plan and begin moving towards a sustainer-based funding model.

In 2010, just three years after launching the sustainer system, our yearly revenue reached \$87,762. Revenue from sustainers was close to \$34,000, and the balance of our income came from grants, donations and magazine sales which totaled close to \$50,000.

Moving forward, one of our principal goals with relation to strengthening our funding structure is to continue to grow our sustainer base. While this model has been slow to establish and incredibly complex to maintain, the trade-off is that reader-supported media is freed from the constraints associated with an advertising-based revenue model.

We have recruited and hired fundraisers on both the local and national levels. Much of this fundraising went into signing up new sustainers, but a portion of their work also went into grant writing, which in the end has resulted in a significant portion of our revenue stream.

As of August 2011, the Media Co-op has 277 sustaining reader members, who each give between \$5 and \$100 per month.

Our business model is deeply intertwined with our participatory structure. It is only by building a sense of ownership among the membership that we can achieve the level of dedicated participation and financial support to achieve our goals.

Because the Media Co-op is a fully functioning multi-stakeholder co-operative, a marked

increase of member outreach is done by collective members and staff. Though it's easy to see this work as part of administrative overhead, we see building systems for member feedback, assuring that meetings and decisions are carried out in accessible and open ways, and engaging the co-op's members as intimately connected to our financial viability.

In 2010, the Media Co-op put \$35,284 towards payroll, and almost \$5,000 towards paying contractors, which include staff members. Journalists, non-staff editors and illustrators and photographers were afforded a mere \$4,830 over the same space of time.⁵ Our 2011-12 budget addresses this discrepancy by meeting a new Media Co-op goal of devoting at least 10 per cent of the budget (before grants) to paying contributors.

Balancing the demands of member outreach with the desire to pay for journalism is one of the big challenges facing the Media Co-op network in the short term.

Challenges, Vision, and Co-operative Growth

There is no doubt that the Media Co-op is the most exciting independent media project in Canada today. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean that the rest takes care of itself.

Although it has been sometimes painful and even more stressful, we've pushed peoples' buttons on the established left, and been free to report about issues that other alternative media organizations simply "can't get on the right side of" because of their own compromises with union money and foundation funding.

Being a co-operative does not mean that we have avoided all of the common pitfalls of grassroots organizing, particularly burnout and fatigue among regular volunteers and contributors. Especially tiring can be the alienation resulting from the mostly-online relationships and communications that drive the national network. Recent efforts to ensure that stipend paid network staff are also involved in locals may alleviate part of this problem, but proper compensation for day-to-day Media Co-op editors, staff and volunteers is an ongoing concern.

Locals, the generators of the majority of the content for the Media Co-op, continue to operate on miniscule budgets that do not leave organizers with much financial flexibility. But locals are also branching out and creating their own revenue streams, through locally tailored grant applications, events, and fundraisers that couldn't be pulled off at a national level.

Interest from organizers in cities across Canada who want to form their own locals has been constant. Because of limited financial resources and a desire to ensure the Media Co-op project continues to produce high quality journalism, we have decided not to open any new locals until such time as we can guarantee a minimum level of support for their establishment.

If we had more resources at our disposal, the possibilities to continue to grow the network of locals would be astounding. Journalism training and "train the trainers" sessions could be set up in cities with "sprouts" or proto-locals, and the Media Co-op network could assist with sustainer drives and promotional materials. The website is easily replicable and could easily accommodate a dozen or more new locals.

All across the country, the work of the dedicated volunteers and editors of the Media Co-op has already shifted the media landscape. During the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, the Vancouver Media Co-op reached millions of people by partnering with the giant of US alternative media, Democracy Now!. A similar arrangement was made during the G20.

Ours is a slow road with a steep pitch, but we continue to advance. We are working to create and maintain a trusted source for relevant, accurate and critical multimedia journalism from across Canada and from around the world.

We're talking about journalism that goes beyond the buzz of the hyper local and instead exists as an organic part of grassroots organizing, analysis and reflection. We're talking about foreign correspondence that avoids the de-contextualized mass media tropes, and brings the real news to our readers.

As a national project with widespread nodes of local support, we are uniquely positioned to deliver both.

Appendix 1: What exactly is a Local, and how do I start one?

What is the VMC?

The Vancouver Media Co-op is a local of the Canada-wide Media Co-op Network. We focus on creating grassroots, independent coverage of social movements and events around Vancouver and occupied [do we mean unceded?] BC.

We formed over the summer of 2009, when a bunch of folks working to support media work around movements against the Olympics in the city (and on stolen native land) opted to build a platform for resistance media that would survive past the Games.

The fact that we had a big event to prepare for helped, as a lot of organizing was already happening in the city. One of the first things we did when about eight of us began working on the VMC was to throw a couple parties and host film screenings celebrating independent media and resistance movements. This helped us get our name out into the community, and raise some funds to cover our basic costs, like photocopying, making stickers, and setting up a phone line.

Our crew started rocking it hard in the months before the Games. Video training workshops and talks on how to do journalism were hosted by collective members and open to the public. We networked with other alternative and independent media in the city so they knew about us and our mission. We started getting the word out about our open publishing website. Thousands of stickers were put up all over town...the fun had begun.

During the Olympics, which took place in Vancouver and Whistler over two weeks in February 2010, we hosted dozens of local and out-of-town journalists in a donated space in the Downtown East Side. We wired the location with high speed internet, set up a server system, made press passes, and put together a comprehensive schedule for each day.

As the anti-Olympics convergence began, we moved into overdrive, holding daily story meetings, sending out a coordinated, complete schedule of events, publishing a daily broadsheet called *Balaclava!*, hosting film nights, and assigning runners and journalists to cover all kinds of events.

The VMC space was a hub of activity throughout the Games. We worked together to ensure that those accessing the space were working on journalism projects. Locals helped orient folks from out of town on all elements of our resistance movements. Our coverage reached millions of people through collaboration with Democracy Now! [Some of this is redundant] and various independent media centers around the world.

Because the catalyst for organizing the VMC came out of an anti-colonial, anti-capitalist movement against corporate control and state repression, many of our founders and

collective members are anti-authoritarians.

It's been over a year since the Games, and through a coordinated effort among our volunteers, we've managed to push past the burnout that can come with organizing around a convergence, and we have kept a strong community presence through ongoing local coverage and analysis. Many of our reader members donate monthly to help keep the VMC rolling.

We've worked to grow the collective through all kinds of creative outreach, while solidifying the participation of a handful of core members who take care of much of the invisible or back-end unpaid work that keeps the Co-op functioning. We offer workshops on a regular basis, so that skills can be shared among collective members and across organizations. At the moment, no paid organizers or journalists work for the VMC, though we do pay for a story every month.

The VMC doesn't have a physical space anymore, but we host weekly open meetings out of Spartacus Books, Vancouver's only radical bookstore. We also have a smaller collective of editor members who meet monthly, their purpose is like that of a board of directors, keeping an eye on finances and policy. Our members range from career journalists to hard-core movement organizers, from retired folks to office workers and artists.

What are the impacts of the VMC?

The Vancouver Media Co-op has had a tangible impact on organizing in Vancouver.

Today, when a grassroots collective is working on a demo or an action, they'll write us into their plans, ensuring that a VMC member is briefed and invited to cover and post their news about the event. This didn't used to be the case.

Today, when folks are throwing a fundraiser or trying to get numbers for an action, they'll post their event to the VMC, along with press releases and even analysis to help others in the community understand the issue at hand.

We believe that the VMC has raised the bar for the possibilities of radical media, not only in Vancouver, but also throughout North America. We've worked hard to become a publicly accessible connective tissue [gross, maybe hub?] for organizers and radicals in the city and around the province.

The VMC is building long-term movement infrastructure, providing folks with a place to see themselves reflected, and to understand the movement. We are ardently opposed to the idea of Status Quo Media (SQUM), so while we employ conventions of traditional journalism, we infuse our work with the possibilities for radical change!

VMC Essentials

The Vancouver Media Co-op's website is open publishing, that means anyone can post their news, photos, videos, events, stories or blog entries. We prioritize local, independent coverage from Vancouver and around occupied BC.

The VMC is a local of a national network called the Media Co-op. We have sister locals in Toronto, Montréal and Halifax. We are legally incorporated as a multi-stakeholder co-operative, and owned by our readers, contributors and editors.

Check us out online at <http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca>

There are all kinds of ways to get involved in the VMC. You can come to a collective meeting if you'd like, the latest details of where meetings are held are posted to the website. You can go ahead and post your news, or check out the website and re-post whatever interests you. You can join our emailing list to find out more about workshops and trainings. Or, you can make a donation or become a monthly sustainer, and own your media.

For more information about the VMC, email vmc@mediacoop.ca

Appendix 2: So, you want to start a new local of the Media Co-op?

Here are the basics, broken down into three parts:

1. Hurray! We love everyone who works on independent and cooperative media, and we want to help you do great work! *However...*
2. The Media Co-op has sustained an extreme amount of growth in the last few years, and we're behind on policies and bases of unity for the existing co-op locals, and we need to sort out what our commitments are, exactly. So we can't start any new full-blown locals for the moment. *But...*
3. We don't want to hold anyone back from getting involved and getting local activity off the ground, so we're encouraging people to take the first step to starting a local, which is to **create a working group**.

How do I start a working group?

Any Media Co-op member can start a working group at any time. No need to check with anyone. (That said, please only start a group if you're serious about, well, working. We don't want lots of empty, inactive groups.) Just create an account on the site, and go to: <http://www.mediacoop.ca/node/add/group>

Once you have a group created, other Media Co-op users can join it. Anyone who is a member of the group can post coverage, blog entries, photos and so on into the group.

What's the difference between a local and a working group?

Locals involve a relationship with the Media Co-op network and *The Dominion*, including regular contact with Media Co-op staff, a formal role in network-wide decision making, and... money!

Practically, becoming a local means that you have a substantial amount of coverage and activity, an ongoing plan for outreach to groups and areas within your city or community, an stable decision making structure, share the common values and practices of the Media Co-op network, and have an ongoing relationship with people who are heavily involved in the network. This will probably involve a number of long conversations.

What are the limitations of a working group?

As a working group, we encourage you to use your space on the Media Co-op site to cover local events, promote your coverage, consult folks on what should be covered, and

generally collaborate on news.

However, we do ask that you **not** do a few things:

- Please do not receive money on behalf of the Media Co-op
- Please do not use the name in the form of [Community] Media Co-op, as we'd like to reserve that for locals. You can use [Community] Working Group at the Media Co-op, or some other name that doesn't include Media Co-op. (Obviously we can't enforce this, but we're asking nicely.)

The way working groups are set up doesn't do something that I want. Can you change X?

Definitely. Our tech crew is all volunteer, so we appreciate your patience, but we'll try to accommodate your needs as best we can. Get in touch at info@mediacoop.ca.

When will you start adding new locals again?

It is not possible to say, because that's a decision that has to be made by all of the locals and Media Co-op staff together.

What will the process for transitioning from a working group to a local look like?

That will also have to wait until we can make a decision collectively. It will likely have to do with the amount of activity at the local level, the quality of outreach done locally, the existence of a base of media co-op members in the area, and the stability of the local decision making structure... and possibly some other criteria. Time will tell. If you're really keen to get started, feel free to get in touch with any questions.