CASE STUDY: Cooperatives and Wealth Creation - a Pilot Study

Opportunity
2012 was the International Year of the Cooperative and Yellow Wood worked with the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) to conduct a pilot study on the unique contribution cooperatives make to the creation and retention of wealth in the communities and regions in which they operate. NCBA observed that cooperatives are challenged to describe the full range of benefits they offer to their communities and investors, including financial and non-financial returns.

Approach
The pilot project used the Wealth Creation Framework, developed through the Wealth Creation in Rural Communities – Building Sustainable Livelihood initiative, funded by the Ford Foundation. This framework provided a lens through which to value a wide range of contributions that cooperatives make to society that go beyond jobs and income to the building blocks essential to support sustainable well-being. Yellow Wood developed a set of tools for introducing the wealth creation framework and identifying impacts in each of the seven forms of wealth. Cooperatives that completed a wealth creation impact assessment received one-on-one coaching calls to discuss how to measure some of those impacts.

Outcome
Nine cooperatives from across the country were introduced to the approach and found the process eye-opening and rewarding. Results of the pilot work with six of the cooperatives were presented at the 2012 NCBA annual conference and written up in a final report for NCBA. Findings from the pilot will be incorporated into a branded NCBA webinar-based curriculum for cooperatives to use the wealth creation framework to better understand, articulate and measure their full range of impacts.

Client
The National Cooperative Business Association (www.ncba.coop) encourages communities to live cooperatively, harnessing the uncommon power of common purpose. They apply cooperative principles in development, advocacy, and education.