

NEXUS COMMUNITY PARTNERS

# North Star Black Cooperative Fellowship: The Journey So Far

Alumni Survey Results  
Cohorts 1-6, 2017-2023





# Our Vision

A woman with dark hair, wearing a colorful patterned top and gold earrings, is speaking into a microphone at a podium. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background shows a large, bright room with arched windows. A blue starburst graphic is in the bottom left corner.

At Nexus Community Partners, we nurture the prosperity of our communities — and in this prosperity, our health, joy, peace, love, safety and the needs of future generations come first.

To dismantle the rigged rules that amass wealth and power in fewer & whiter hands, we must approach community wealth-building from a **reparative framework** rooted in Black culture. Economic development efforts that ignore culture are unsustainable and lead to inevitable harm. Our culture itself is a critical resource for sustainable wealth creation.



# Our Vision

We created North Star in 2017 to start living into a future of Black wealth: self-governance, spaces for healing, and an abundance of resources.

The fellowship is a 7-month cohort experience that brings worker-owners of Black-led cooperatives together, rooted in the history of Black American cooperative economics.





# North Star Alumni Survey: Fall 2023

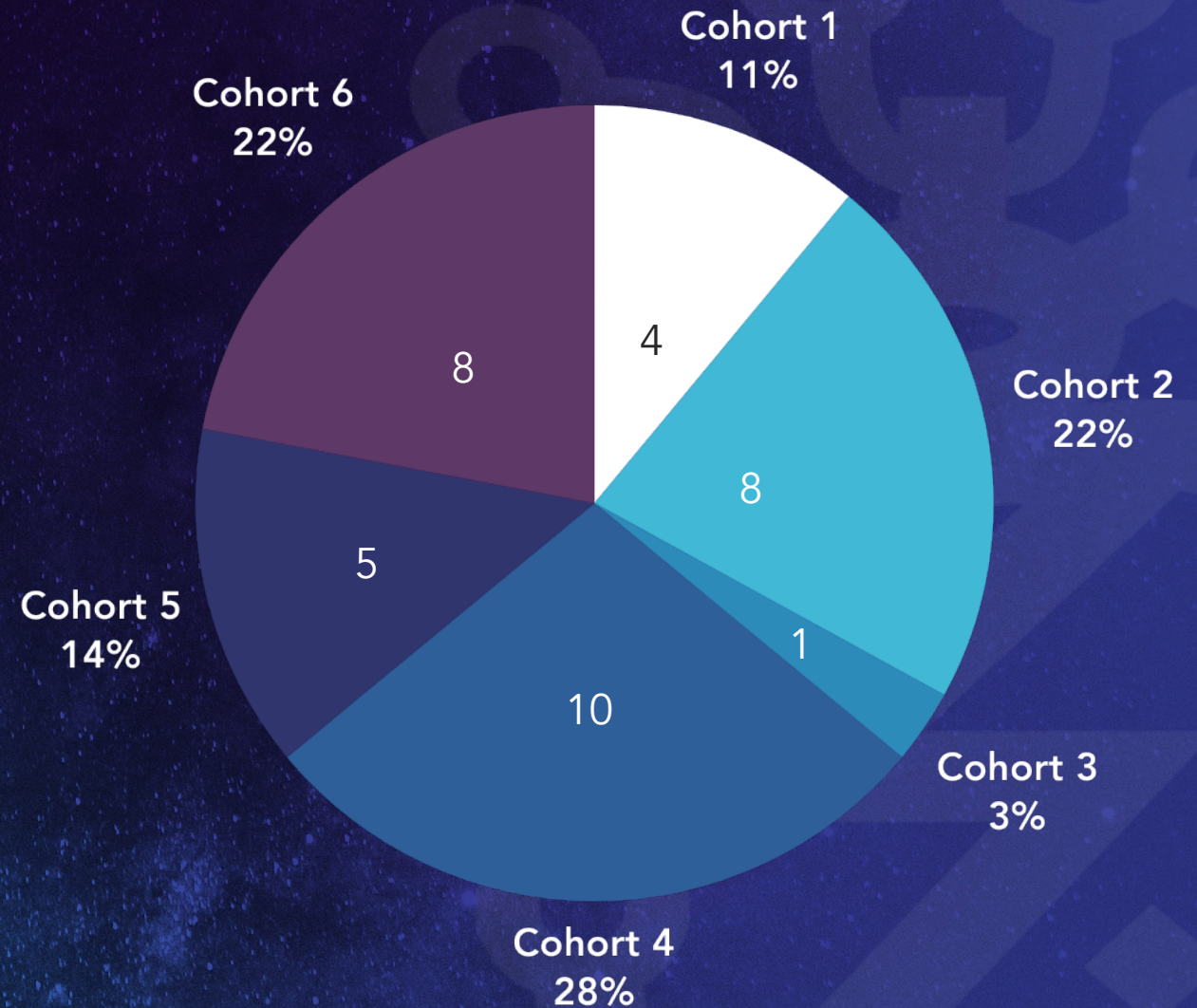
- We wanted to re-engage alumni, see where they were in their journeys, and learn about the impacts of North Star and how we can continue to improve the program.
- This was our first comprehensive survey since North Star's inception.
  - Survey sent to alumni from Cohorts 1-6
  - Responses collected between Sept. 12 – Oct. 10, 2023





# Survey Participation

- Total alumni: 97
- Number of respondents: 36
- Response rate: 37%
- Alumni rated the program's:
  - Sense of community & support
  - Educational impact & inspiration
  - Resourcefulness & opportunities
  - Cultural & historical awareness





# Alumni Feedback: Highlights

- 81% of respondents were satisfied with their North Star experience.
- 94% agreed they took something meaningful from North Star.
- 2 out of 3 agreed the structure (mix of activities and discussion) worked well.
- 92% agreed facilitators were helpful and effective in meeting their fellowship objectives.

**"I am shook by the possibilities of what has been done, is being done, and will be done in the future. I see cooperatives everywhere now. I'm embedding cooperative principles in all things that I do. I've found a new religion, and it's called People Power."**

**"I now understand that I have a place in cooperatives, and that our people have always done this. I've begun embedding myself in cooperative communities and networking across states."**



# Alumni Feedback: Highlights

- Building relationships and being grounded in existing cooperatives
- Personal growth and professional development from feeling welcomed and empowered
- Strong appreciation for the:
  - Community-building aspects of North Star
  - Educational value and resources provided
  - Enriching cultural insights into Black cooperative economics

**"Sitting in a Zoom meeting full of beautiful, passionate Black people from all walks of life and not feeling out of place or unwelcome!"**

**"More than anything, I valued the relationships that gathered together for our cohort. The facilitators, speakers, and participants. I am very inspired by our time together."**

**"I really love the Black Study Sessions. Thanks for offering those spaces."**



# Ongoing Engagement

- Over 50% of survey respondents are still engaged in cooperative work with alumni in each cohort year.
- 75% of alumni engage with North Star and Nexus after graduating from the program.

"I've continued to connect with a few others who have graduated. I've also been able to set an example for my family, who later participated in a cohort. I have participated in various Nexus activities over the years since."

"We've grown, hired, built leadership. We'd love for more folks to go through your training or have a 'train the trainer' opportunity so we can educate our membership about cooperatives well."

"I'm working to acquire land to build a cooperative living space, where families and individuals can take a mental break from the hardship of financial struggles and live in a space free of bills and expenses for 3-6 months so they can regroup, reset, and envision a new path, create the steps to implement the plan to better their path forward."





# Alumni Takeaways

"The experience helped me  
engage in finding my own place  
within Black Collective  
Economics."





“My major takeaway is that there are so many of us working for a freer and more cooperative future for our communities. We can work together and support/uplift the work each group is doing in different sectors; it all brings the collective closer to living the dream. The learning I use from North Star is cooperative-specific language and connections to people across the Twin Cities and the country doing this work.”

“Everything is possible with the power of the people. [I learned the] historical context of cooperatives, history constantly repeating itself, and the grassroots solutions that keep people thriving.”





"Nexus is and can become the hub of thinking and supporting radical cooperative practices in the Twin Cities. We need that support and expertise here."

"Major takeaway: The importance and value in carving informal educational space to learn and build community. Ongoing learning application, the value of working as a cooperative, and the different kinds of cooperatives that exist in the Twin Cities."

"Belief in alternative models, rather than business as usual. Deeper strategic thinking about how we protect, build wealth or resources for our communities that need our care, and healing from continual state violence and theft."





# Alumni Feedback: Opportunities

Almost 1 in 5 alumni felt further resources were needed to take action steps, connect with other members, and share practical, legal or start-up information and experiences.

"I am really struggling to pay bills, and I need money. Sorry to say, the skill building is a huge passion of mine — but financial aid is what I need the most."

"Technical assistance, expertise in the legal and financial aspects of running a cooperative would be helpful. [I'd like] space to thoughtfully explore radical cooperative values that acknowledge a history of racial oppression, and wrestle with what reparations and reconciliation and integration might look like in these spaces."

"I want to know more about intergenerational cooperative movements throughout history and how they function now."



# The Journey Continues

"We are each other's harvest. We are each other's business. We are each other's magnitude and bond."

— Gwendolyn Brooks

Thank you for sharing your reflections, dreams, and life updates with us.

Have questions or additional feedback?  
Email [northstar@nexuscp.org](mailto:northstar@nexuscp.org).



Pamoja  
Swahili for "together"

Created by Duaba Unenra,  
Cohort 3 alumnus



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