

Candidate Statement: Esteban Kelly

I'm excited to be seeking re-election to the NCBA CLUSA board after six years of service to the cross-sector cooperative movement's apex organization in this country. As the Executive Director of the U.S. Federation of Worker Co-ops, I bring voice to the worker co-op sector and connections to our networks and advocacy efforts at the grassroots. As a leader in what is currently the most rapidly growing co-op sector in the U.S. by many measures, I am keenly aware of how critical the cooperative business model is to the just, sustainable and equitable society we are trying to create.

My leadership on the NCBA CLUSA board has served to ensure that NCBA becomes a Force for Good with a positive impact larger than its size. Cooperatives don't just build a better world; they can re-build the communities that have been devastated by the dominant economic system, and the rural people and exploited urban communities left behind during recent decades of "economic progress."

My background is thoroughly cross-sector, particularly in housing, education, grocery/ food, student, multi-stakeholder and, of course, the worker co-op sector. I also have some experience in international co-op development (particularly through grassroots social movements in Brazil), and more recently have been involved in international co-op relations, primarily in the Americas region of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) where my Spanish, Portuguese and some French language proficiency have come in handy.

In 2016, I had the opportunity to participate in an NCBA CLUSA delegation to Cuba as part of the U.S. – Cuba Cooperative Working Group, and I brought other worker co-op leaders to the table to connect with their Cuban counterparts in the textiles, restaurants, consulting and screen-printing industries.

As worker co-ops grow, we all grow. As grassroots worker-owners push for policy changes at the county, state, municipal or regional level, all cooperatives benefit through a better understanding of our model and its success. And finally, as a founder of a worker co-op dedicated to facilitation (as well as education and consulting), I add extra heft where appropriate to ease group dynamics and governance processes that are essential to healthy group function.