

LELA KLEIN

Greater Dayton Union Co-op Initiative

2017 Global Fellow



BIG BOLD IDEA

Build economic power from the ground up with blue collar workers in Dayton, Ohio, by developing a network of worker-owned businesses that create good jobs and foster ownership culture.

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

CO-OP Dayton promotes economic stability by creating cooperative businesses that are accountable to workers and rooted in the community. Post-industrial cities like Dayton, Ohio, have faced divestment in working-class neighborhoods and neighborhoods of color, leading to economic disenfranchisement. CO-OP Dayton fosters ownership culture through training and leadership development, incubating worker-owned startups, and providing technical support to existing businesses converting into cooperatives. CO-OP Dayton builds financing and management models and business plans to launch cooperatives with the highest chance of success. By creating an interconnected network of worker-owned businesses, CO-OP Dayton forges an economy that supports working families and lessens inequality.

PERSONAL BIO

Lela Klein is the co-founder and executive director of CO-OP Dayton, an incubator for worker-owned businesses that broaden economic opportunities and strengthen blue-collar communities. Lela has spent her career fighting for economic justice and equity for working people around the world. As an organizer in the labor movement, Lela participated in domestic and international campaigns, gaining experience with democratic, worker-led organizations. Prior to co-founding CO-OP Dayton, she was general counsel of the IUE-CWA, a 45,000-member manufacturing union, where she led major strategic projects, advocated on behalf of working people, and created a mentorship program to foster leadership among young manufacturing employees. Lela was also an organizer and later an attorney with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). After witnessing the destructive impact of the global recession on American workers, Lela returned to her hometown of Dayton, Ohio, in 2012 to use her legal and organizing training to build innovative, worker-centered solutions. Lela holds a JD from Harvard Law School and a BA from Cornell University.

Organization/Fellow Location

Dayton, United States

Impact Location

North America

United States

Organization Structure

Nonprofit

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

