



Why Our GM Development Services?

Columinate’s consultants/instructors are experts and leaders in their subject matter.

We help your GM develop a network of expert resources that will be in place long after the classes are over.

We work with your grocery store’s actual documents and situations, as much as possible.

Our instructors will refer your GM to additional educational opportunities, many of which are available at a low or no cost.

Leading an independent grocery store has never been as difficult as it is now. And leading a multi-stakeholder organization like a cooperative brings additional complexities to an already challenging role. To be successful in leading a food co-op, a leader must have an array of technical expertise as well as strong leadership skills.

The purpose of this GM Development Program is to create an initial framework/curriculum for an incoming General Manager, the GM Trainee, to be fully oriented, trained and supported in their new position so that the GM and the co-op are both poised for success. We work with each individual co-op to co-create the best plan to match their needs.

The Complete GM Development Program is designed to leverage best practices in other food co-ops and expertise but also designed to recognize and support the unique offerings and opportunities that each co-op will have that may be different than some existing food co-ops.

“After working 20 years for a major Northeastern grocery chain, I entered the co-op world. Considering my inexperience on this side of the equation, my work and my training through Columinate has been vital.

This program will be tailored to your needs. I was a little soft on the financial and marketing side, so much of my training was centered on that. You may be stronger in those areas and want assistance elsewhere. That’s one of the beautiful programs about a program like this: the flexibility.”

—Netse Lytle, GM at Wild Oats Market

Potential Program Modules

The following modules are offered in the key operational areas of all independent grocery stores.

We will conduct an initial skills assessment to determine which classes would offer the greatest return on investment for both the grocery store and the GM. A grocery store may select and combine as many different modules and courses as needed to achieve the desired individualized development goals.

Module 1: Hands-on and in-person operations training at a host training store

- The purpose of this module is to provide real-life training in all key departments to enhance leadership perspective for all areas of operations prior to new co-op opening.
- Typical in-person operations training engagements are 4+ weeks on location with a skilled training store. We try to place the GM trainee in a host training store that is in region.

Module 2: Guided Coursework

We offer a potential of 7 remote one-on-one live courses designed to enhance and improve the executive oversight skills in essential areas of grocery management. These topic-focused courses are delivered through live sessions via Zoom and include guided study by a seasoned expert in each of these areas:

- Accounting and Financial Document Literacy: Audrey Griffin
- Achieving Financial Metrics: Jeanie Wells
- Board Relations and Governance: Leslie Watson and Jeanie Wells
- Leveraging Data and Strong Category Management: Scot DeStasio and Jen Christopher
- Building and Managing Your Image and Marketing: Rebecca Torpie
- Building and Managing your HR Practices: Sarah Dahl
- Co-op Culture, Diversity, and Engaging Stakeholders: Thane Joyal and James Morrell

The purpose of the remote sessions and coaching is to leverage sustained learning opportunities in certain key areas while offering flexibility in scheduling and minimizing the need for travel, but matching the new GM or GM Trainee with an expert in that field.

Module 3: Building Real Leadership Capacity

While some aspects of running a successful grocery store can be taught, being an effective and intentional leader requires commitment and continual work. If working on your leadership effectiveness is one of your critical issues, we can help. We offer a robust leadership assessment process and regular coaching sessions on a mutually agreeable schedule for the incoming GM and the coach, to provide specific leadership development curriculum to the incoming GM.

- Assessing individual leadership style and capacity, leadership enrichment plan. The new GM or GM Trainee will be guided through “CPI 260” assessment tool to assist with full insight into natural leadership tendencies and development opportunities.
- Using the results of the full assessment, the new GM is matched with a leadership mentor who will work with the GM to provide steady on-going leadership coaching throughout a mutually agreed-upon period, to build capacity in areas identified in the assessment process.

Module 4: Facilitated Store Readiness Training through Guided Store Audit Tours

This module includes training opportunities to visit stores in the region in a structured manner. An experienced Columinate retail trainer will be in-person as a store audit partner with the GM Trainee and will facilitate a structured tour and visit with a group of stores in a designated area that may share common format, scale or goals with the GM. The purpose of these guided store audit tours is to practice critical evaluation of store conditions and readiness in a variety of conditions to help the new GM or GM Trainee think critically about their own store’s readiness and shopping experience. And the strong secondary purpose of these guided store audits is to introduce and foster in-person peer connections in the region by facilitating introductions and connections with peers for the incoming GM.

This program is designed to allow each incoming GM to choose the development stack that is just what they need based on their specific experiences and skills. Ready to jump in? Schedule a free consultation to help you create your own customized development stack that you need to be successful. By helping facilitate this mixing and matching of development modules into a GM’s unique customized stack of development, you can truly help a GM can build strength just where they need it and ready them for the road ahead.

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