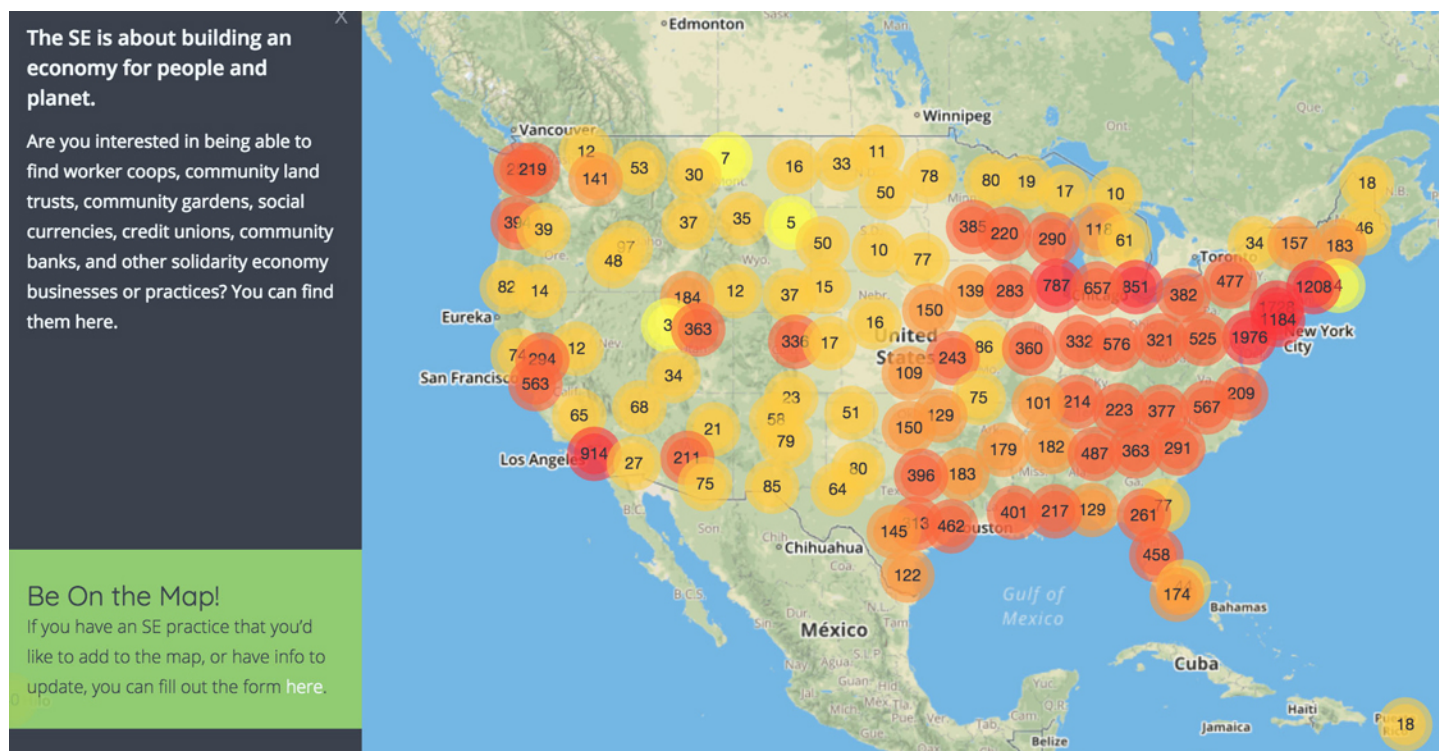


## Building an Economy for the Common Good Mapping Community Organizations Building an Equitable and Sustainable Future



*The United States Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN) created this map to highlight all of the organizations in the country that are participating in the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) — what we call The Economy for Our Common Good.*

### Workshop 1 — INTRODUCTIONS

#### Workshop Overview, Introductions to the Economy for the Common Good and to Each Other

**Purpose:** To build a community spirit among the participants by giving them a common bond in understanding their common values and goals of the workshop; and to educate all of the participants in the history and reality of the solidarity economy and the Economy for the Common Good.

**Materials:** Justice Rising on Building an Economy for People and Nature, video of Nancy Neamtam talking about the social solidarity economy.

**Paradigm:** Introductions among the people and to the material to understand whom you are with and where you are going.

**Context:** Concerned citizens have challenged the rise of money values over the values of humans and nature for centuries. In the mid 1600s, when the merchants took over English social and economic values, Quaker ethics rose in protest. As Quaker historian Douglas Gwyn points out “the individualizing tendencies of capitalist venture and wage labor gradually eroded traditional relationships with the earth, within families and local communities.” Quaker preachers responded, pointing out that “trading has become a trap,

to captivate men in deceitful dealings and vain customs and fashions, to serve the adulterous eye and vanity. In this trap the just become a prey to the insatiable, the obsessively self-interested.” Vainglorious clothing and amusements “have lost the man of the heart through vanity.” Consumerism “destroys the creation.” Flattering merchandisers “cheat poor country people. . . What traps there are in laws, which should protect the simple?”

In the succeeding years, critics from Thomas Jefferson to Karl Marx have laid out their concerns about the impact of money power on our economic, political, social and environmental systems. Throughout that time many models evolved to offset the destructive aspects of capitalism. In the late 1990s the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS) came together to globally unite all existing organizations modeling the values of a new economy. They point out “*The Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) is an alternative to capitalism and other authoritarian, state-dominated economic systems. In SSE ordinary people play an active role in shaping all of the dimensions of human life: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. SSE exists in all sectors of the economy: production, finance, distribution, exchange, consumption and governance. It also aims to transform the social and economic system that includes public, private and third sectors. SSE is not only about the poor, but strives to overcome inequalities, which includes all classes of society. SSE has the ability to take the best practices that exist in our present system (such as efficiency, use of technology and knowledge) and transform them to serve the welfare of the community based on different values and goals. (...) SSE seeks systemic transformation that goes beyond superficial change (...)*”

The official beginning of the US Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN) took place at the 2007 Atlanta US Social Forum. Since then they have networked hundreds of organizations across the country that take action to impose human and environmental values over the value of money. Those organizations can be seen on their map, at <http://solidarityeconomy.us/>

The Evergreen Co-ops in Cleveland serve as a great example of what can be done when public institutions are connected to worker-owned businesses. In that situation, hospitals and universities provide the customer base for worker-owned businesses that provide them needed services from laundries to alternative energy. The result has been a successful partnership. We can all do the same in our own communities

**Activities:** This workshop is about building a new economic community as well as building a community among workshop participants. We often start off with a rendition of a wonderful song by the great vocal activist Melanie DeMore called *Lead With Love*. It is a fine ballad to start people down the path of creating systemic change. You can see her rendition of it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9w22S8foSbk&t=11s> And you can download a score of the song [here](#).

Once that empowering song has brought everyone together, the facilitators should introduce themselves. Facilitators must be candid about how they are involved in the current economic system. As our friend Daniel Tygel says, everyone has to get his or her hands dirty in the predominant economic system. So, do not be shy about sharing that. It will help everyone be more real about who they are and why they are taking the class. Then give the participants an overview of the course and what they can expect from each workshop. Follow up with a discussion on the mechanics and practical rules of each workshop. [Here is a sample](#) of the workshop structure we have used.

Move from here to the heart of this workshop, which is getting people to tell their story with passion about who they are and why they are taking this class. Take notes so you can be knowledgeable about each person’s history. This can easily take an hour.

Then begin a discussion on what an Economy for the Common Good looks like. See if everyone has read the *Justice Rising on Building an Economy for People and Nature* that concentrates on the solidarity economy. We often also print out some copies of it at a local copy shop and hand them out to people who have not read them.

Describe the history and general make up of the solidarity economy. Show one or two videos about the Economy for the Common Good from [our list of videos](#). Our favorite for this workshop is the talk by Nancy Neamtam about the amazing Social Solidarity economy in Quebec. You can get it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2s9REaYfD8> and only need to show the part from 13:30-24:50.

Before the end of the workshop pass out the material you will use in the next workshop to define the Economy for the Common Good in your community. These include a [list of problems](#) that our current economic and political systems cannot solve, as well as a partial list of causes of those problems, along with a partial list of the solutions to the problems. Also pass out our partial [list of actions](#) that organizations may take to solve the seeming unsolvable problems of the world. Have people study the list for the next workshop and encourage them to make additions or alterations to these lists.

It is also a good idea to leave time for people to make relevant announcements at the end of the workshop.

The day after the workshop, email the problems, causes, and solutions list as well as the actions list to everyone and include a current article on some topic that points out the need to have an Economy for the Common Good.

Then the day before the next workshop, send a reminder email that the workshop is coming up and again attach the problems, causes and solutions list as well as the actions list and maybe another relevant article.