



# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY

**THE URBAN CO-OP**

**LIMERICK COMMUNITY GROCERY  
CLG**

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Unit 8 Eastway Business Park, Ballysimon Road, Limerick  
CRO: 530119





# OUR PURPOSE



Limerick Community Grocery CLG T/A The Urban Co-op has as its main purpose to develop a community grocery co-operative for the benefit of its members. The utilisation of co-operative buying power allows us to provide a full grocery with an emphasis on quality, support of local suppliers and wholesome nourishment. With organic status we consciously operate towards zero waste and a circular economy.

Our space supports the provision of classes and events under the theme of enhancing wellbeing. Supporting the principles of co-operatives we facilitate volunteerism for marginalised groups in a dynamic environment that enhances educational opportunities and social change.

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# CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS



*John Liston*

Seven years is a milestone for any business. The Urban Co-op has grown from a small idea to a blossoming business that is making its mark on Limerick and beyond. The Limerick Community Grocery has allowed us to not just focus on transactions but on meeting the needs of a growing community in ways that we never imagined initially. It is truly a platform for social change and we want to harness the potential for more.

Each year has seen membership and sales continue to rise as the business has grown. Our trajectory of growth points towards a €1M turnover this year. The economic driver of the development of the Co-op model have seen us support the local economy with €1.6M in recent years, while providing employment at a living wage and meaningful volunteerism opportunities. Over 300 suppliers benefit economically from our operation. Our determination to support local has seen us prioritise supplies last year at 69% of our spend. As Brexit still gains its impact we aim to bring our local produce towards 75% of our spend.

Our dependency on grant funding as part of our growth towards sustainability has decreased as we have grown. From 2016 when 50% of income was grant funded we have seen our own income generating capacity increase to 90%. Strategic funding support has of course been critical to help generate the momentum of The Urban Co-op but it is notable that the investment of grants to date has yielded a ten fold return back into the community.

Our strategic plan has also been a significant achievement this year which has helped us to focus on priorities and dreams. This was made possible by the social enterprise development award made by the Social Innovation Fund of Ireland. We were also recipients of the All Ireland Community and Council Best Business in the Community award.

(We have been awarded the Bronze prize this year in the same category!)

2019 has not been without its difficulties. Operational challenges, technology glitches and two break ins included, but were balanced with the progress and learning associated. Efforts to harness the potential of the site in Eastway in terms of room rental as an extra income have yielded much return in terms of social impact. Over 700 classes/events took place on site with many therapists now using this hub to carry out wellness related activities. Our journey is also underpinned by our increasing role in supporting the environment. Zero waste, plastic free and the circular economy are strong drivers for us. It is planned to expand the Memo of Association soon to reflect the added purpose to our mission. Focus has been placed on gathering baseline data and seeking continuous improvements which you will no doubt see as you shop today.

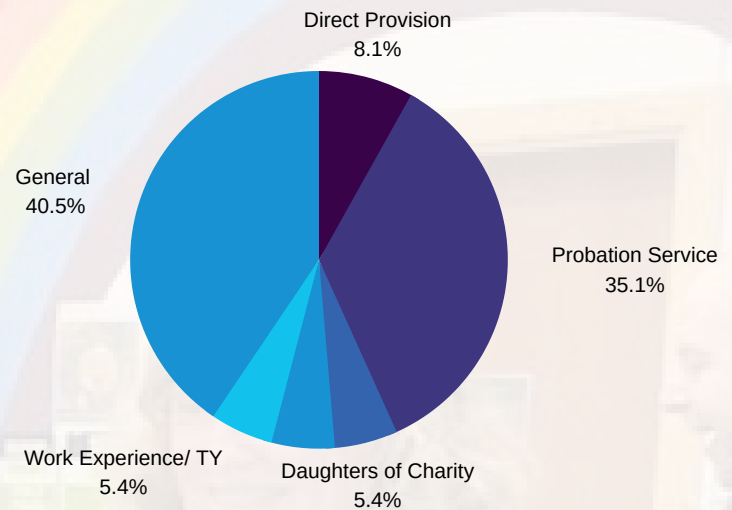
The pandemic has of course placed another challenge for us that was unforeseen. As we reflect on the story of The Urban Co-op we note we are still here serving an increasing community their basic needs and finding we are more needed than ever. Customers have responded positively to our efforts to maintain a consistent safe experience. We have plans to implement a strong fundraising strategy that harnesses the significant membership to meet the growing demands. Limericks Community Grocery has come a long way and has much more to do in terms of serving our community. Online development, a demo kitchen and food tourism are pipeline dreams to date.

Thank you to my board colleagues, staff and members for continuing to support the Co-op to grow and develop. It is appreciated!

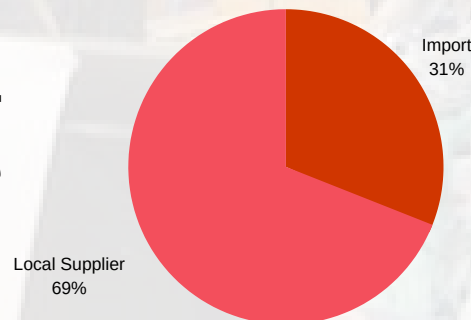
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# 2019 SOCIAL IMPACT

## Volunteering at the Co-op (37 in total)



## Local Supplier Preference



**776**  
Events & Classes



**Footfall**  
18004 (+22%)



**32**  
Research  
Students



**Membership**  
2070 (+88%)



**7**  
Employees



## 2019 TESTIMONALS

*"Well I feel that I owe it to yourselves here as ye were so good to me, none of ye judged me, none of ye had preconceptions that I was accepted for what I was and my ability"*

## Barry - Probation Service



*"I've loved every moment that I have spent here and I would encourage more people to volunteer with the Co-op because it's the best time you would ever spend with the lovely people who work here. Genuinely they would treat you like they would treat anyone else. It's a beautiful family they have here."*

Kumbulani

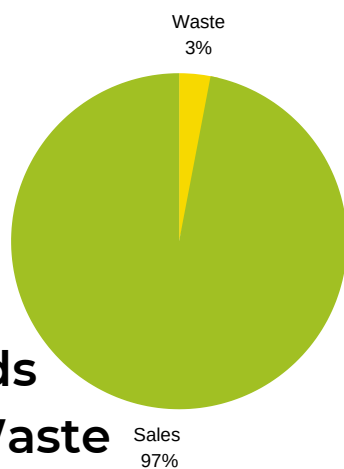
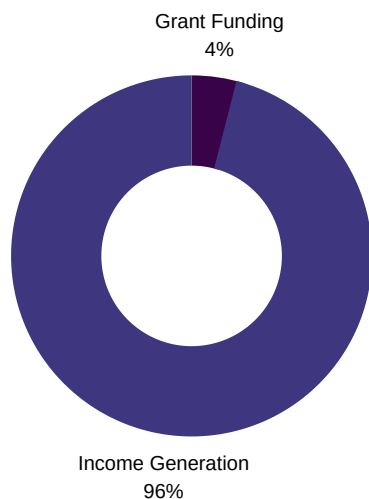
*This is my first experience at the co-op and it is absolutely fantastic! There is so much fantastic stuff here and the staff are really good as well and that's a great help. I came to look for stuff for my mum who's having problems with her gut at the moment and I'm going home with lots of new information, so thank you for that!*

Donna - New member

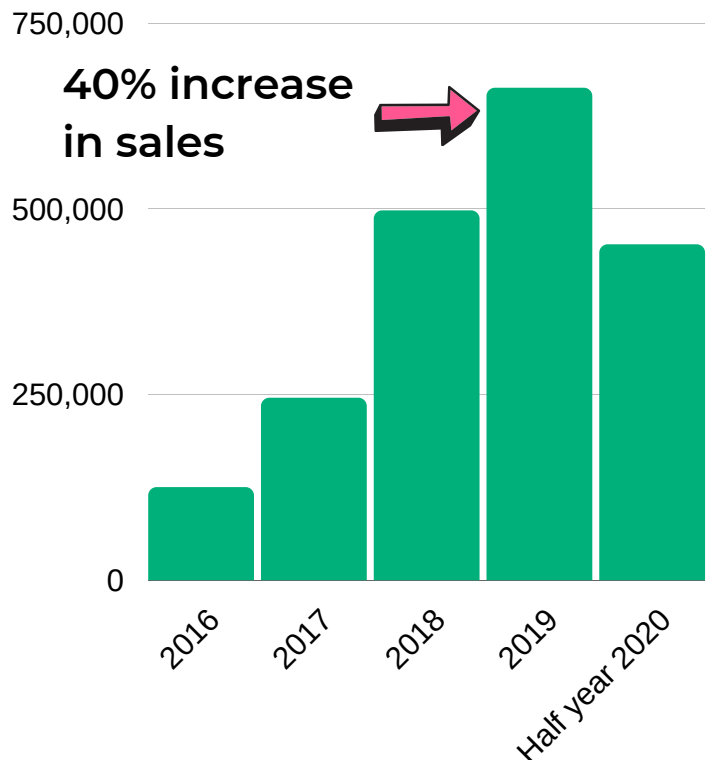


# 2019 FINANCES

## Grant Support



## Towards Zero Waste

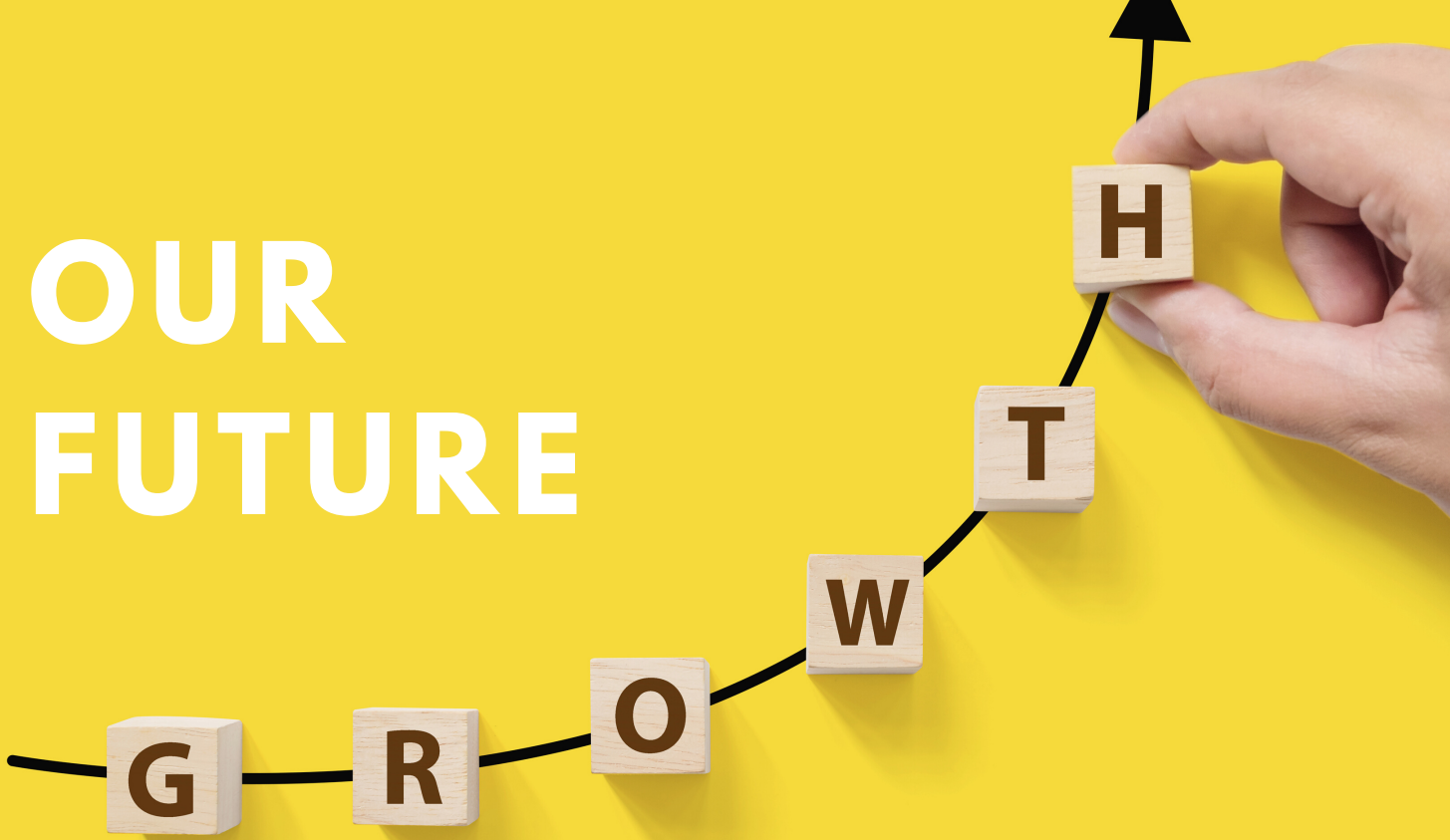


**Income: €663,986**  
**Expenditure: €698,098**

2019 has continued the trend of growth in sales as the grocery grows in membership and the company expands its purpose. We saw a 40% increase in sales from the previous year. Grant support allocation reduced from 10% in 2018 to 4% this year on our journey towards full sustainability. Costs too have also risen significantly as part of the transition to the premises in Eastway to include wellness classes & events. A deficit of €32,379 for 2019 has resulted. An increase in margins to 29% this year have helped to maintain a competitive market. Fundraising initiatives will be part of the overall strategy to make up for these losses going forward.



# OUR FUTURE



The Urban Co-op is a dynamic project that is constantly looking forward. More than a shop, it is a platform for social change and one we recognise has much potential for addressing many social issues. As our social fabric is loosened the environment we work towards is one where social connection is facilitated more than ever.

COVID 19 has offered many challenges and opportunities. It has refocused our priorities to serve our community where it is needed. Our dedicated team are committed to working through the challenges presented and we are proud to be where we are.

Our vision to develop a demonstration kitchen on site is key to many initiatives we wish to pursue including education projects, product innovation & food tourism. Underpinned by support for the local economy, maintaining a strong circular economy & increasing food sovereignty, we are eager to be a model for other communities to follow.

Fundraising initiatives to support projects will also be a priority for us as we work towards full sustainability.

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