Webinar:
New Thinking on Co-operative Governance: Highlights from the International Co-operative Governance Symposium

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Saint Mary’s University

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Agenda

• About the Host
• Why a Symposium on Governance?
• About the Symposium
• ICA Blueprint
• Themes and key issues
• Where do we go from here?
• Questions
Hosted by:
Co-operative Management Education

Master of Management, Co-operatives and Credit Unions (since 2003)
Graduate Diploma in Co-operative Management (2013)
International Consortium of Leaders in Co-operative Management Education
Symposia (4 so far)
Imagine 2012
Research
Hosting symposia is an important initiative for us.

- Helping the sector explore potential solutions to tough, unanswered questions
- Providing input into our research; training; education agenda; PD for alumni, student, and instructors
- Broadening everyone’s perspective while learning from other experts across the co-operative movement.
Why Governance?

- A critical element of the co-op difference
- Limited research on co-op governance
- Diversity of approach to governance in the sector
- Unanswered questions about best co-op approaches
- Lack of training on co-op approaches
The Symposium was a gathering of governance practitioners and researchers who discussed and debated the challenges and opportunities for co-operative governance at a global scale.

The Governance Symposium aligned with the ICA Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade. Summary Report being delivered to ICA

Pauline Green, President of the International Co-operative Alliance, stated that "Good Governance is vital to the trust and confidence in which business is held in today's world. Moreover it is the life blood of our people-owned and controlled model of business - so congratulations to Saint Mary's for this governance symposium which will highlight a key ingredient in helping us build this co-operative decade."
The Symposium attracted roughly 100 participants including:

- Academic researchers and instructors
- Chief governance officers and corporate secretaries, Board Chairs and Directors, CEOs
- Co-operative sector organizations/associations
- Governance consultants

Countries represented included: Canada, US, UK, Italy, France, Finland, Croatia, Poland, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago.
ICA Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade

One of 5 interrelated themes:

- Elevate participation within membership and governance to a new level

The Blueprint use “participation” as a short-hand for the unique co-operative approach through which individuals own their co-operative, and participate in its democratic governance.
Emerging themes in co-operative governance

Governance directly related to co-op success / failure

Co-op governance is about member control
  • Communication
  • Engagement
  • Empowerment
  • Decision-making
New forms of governance?

Use new forms of participation (virtual, symbolic)
‘Deep vs shallow’ participation
Identifying with the co-op (symbols; co-op culture)
Approaches at the Symposium

Panels, presentations, discussions, question periods:
- conceptual: research and practitioner
- practical examples (cases)
- how to: board assessment, skill sets
Disconnects

- Skills and assessment apply to any Board of directors (agency issues- board vs management)
- Concepts and practice of co-op governance talk about
  - Diffusion of power; member control
  - Member engagement through participation in governance and decision-making (e.g. Elected district delegates sit on Board committees)
  - Complexity and network governance
  - Convergence of interests, rather than conflict of interest
Concepts and practice

• Diffusion of power
  • Avoid oligarchy

• Member engagement
  • Take ownership of the co-op

• Complexity and network governance
  • Subsidiarity principle – decisions at lowest levels

• Convergence of interests-shared vision
  • Revisit the role of managers; management style
  • Manager -the extended hand of the Board – align interests; remove conflict; accountable to members
Emerging issues in co-op governance

- Growth and governance – keep the mission alive
- Complexity (adaptation; resilience; innovation)
- Transparency
- Networks – a must for survival
- Vision and strategy – the power of WHY
- Risk aversion and the role of 2nd tier co-ops
- Education and training
Additional issues

Importance of staff (labour) engagement as members
Governance to ensure the subordinate role of capital
Network to reduce risk – form capital funds; share governance expertise; pool of co-op directors; cross-directorships;
Examine the role of government – co-op supportive role (esp. social coops and/or developmental states – collaboration on values, rather than control)
Where we go from here?

Saint Mary’s commitments:
• Summary Report to inform: ICA, 2014 Summit, research agenda
• Existing research, case studies, approach to feed into our education programs

Personal commitments:
• All participants took away ideas that they will implement

Other ideas?
Questions?

Go to the website to find:

• Final program
• Access the Summary Report (available Oct 15)
• Download presentations made on September 7th
• List of registrants

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Co-operative Management Education: