



## Center for Cooperatives

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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### Call for Proposals for CCMA 2025

CCMA 2025 will take place May 29 – 31, 2025, in Duluth, Minnesota. The University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives welcomes proposals for breakout sessions for CCMA 2025 through **Friday, February 28, 2025**. Please read this document carefully before submitting your proposal. We look forward to reading your proposals!

#### **2025 THEME: Lighting the Way: Cooperatives Build a Better World**

This year's conference theme celebrates the United Nations' International Year of Cooperatives (IYC2025) and its powerful message: *Cooperatives Build a Better World*. The theme highlights the transformative role cooperatives play in addressing global challenges and fostering shared prosperity, resilience, and sustainability.

Drawing inspiration from the Northern Lights visible in Duluth, MN, the theme symbolizes the beauty and potential of individuals working together, and how cooperatives—like auroras—can illuminate the path toward a brighter shared future. By embracing the principles of collective action and solidarity, cooperatives create a spectrum of possibilities locally and globally.

Together, through cooperation, we are shaping a better world, inspired by the brilliance of what we can achieve collectively.

#### **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

CCMA is the longest-standing national gathering of retail food co-op leaders in the U.S, creating an inclusive space that welcomes a broad range of food co-op leaders – from managers and staff to board members and cooperative allies – fostering connections across all levels. CCMA attendees learn, connect, collaborate, and come away reinvigorated to do the hard but important work of empowering communities and building a more just and sustainable food system through the cooperative model.

How we fulfill the purpose:

- Held annually in partnership with rotating host co-ops, CCMA prioritizes a vibrant, locally-rooted experience that showcases the unique aspects of the community through curated tours and activities.
- Our programming combines movement-building with hands-on training in cooperative governance and operations, emphasizing peer learning, practical application, and adding strength to the broader cooperative movement. As part of a continuum of training opportunities for retail food co-op leaders, we situate learning within the broader local, regional, and cooperative context.

- We invite attendees to join us ready to learn, share insights, and collaborate to strengthen the cooperative movement!

### **CCMA 2025 OUTCOMES**

Participants will leave CCMA 2025 with the following:

- deepened understanding of the co-op model and how their individual co-ops contribute to the global cooperative movement.
- meaningful connections with peers around specific topics, initiatives, or roles.
- new knowledge and skills that will help them better fulfill their roles at their local co-op.

### **WHO ATTENDS CCMA?**

CCMA is an annual, three-day, national gathering of food cooperative leaders. The conference typically has 300-350 attendees, which include co-op management, staff, board members, and consultants.

Previous CCMA had the average breakdown of attendee roles:

- Co-op directors – 45%
- Co-op GMs, CEOs, CFOs, and department managers – 28%
- Co-op support professionals such as consultants, attorneys, accountants – 17%
- Co-op staff – 10%

### **BREAKOUT SESSION FORMAT**

The conference features two general plenary sessions and 25 breakout sessions, receptions and networking, co-op tours, and a closing night party. We will use the WHOVA app again this year to help attendees to connect and network around topics of interest.

Each breakout session is part of a track. Breakout sessions are 90 minutes in length and can be delivered in the format of your choice: presentation session, teaching session, or workshop. We use the following definitions and room set-ups:

Presentation Session: innovative and challenging topic of interest to an audience. One to three presenters each present material related to the theme of the session. Following the presentations, there are at least 15-20 minutes of Q&A. Standard room set: head table and lectern for presenters, chairs in rows for attendees.

Teaching Session: consists of one or two experts with a how-to approach to the stated subject matter. Standard room set-up: chairs set at round tables for attendees.

Workshop: A workshop provides an opportunity to exchange information or work on a common problem, project, or shared interest. Presentations are brief, allowing adequate time for reflective discussion and interaction. Didactic presentations are limited, and learning by doing occupies most of the session. Standard room set-up: chairs set at round tables for attendees.

**All presentations must be done in person.**

At this time, we will only accept proposals for presentations in-person. Breakout sessions will take place at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center on Friday, May 30 and Saturday, May 31, 2025.

#### **TIMELINE:**

- January 9, 2025: Call for Proposals opens.
- February 28, 2025: Call for Proposals closes.
- March 28, 2025: UWCC staff will notify all applicants of their proposal status via email.
- April 18, 2025: Presenters confirm participation.

#### **BREAKOUT SESSION TRACKS**

CCMA 2025 will feature five tracks:

**Track 1: Grocery Glow-Up: Lighting the Way for Co-op Success**— This track is designed for attendees who may be new to cooperatives or the retail grocery industry. Topics may include pricing strategies; operational best practices; merchandising fundamentals; product mix; strategies for documenting systems and practices; prepared foods; etc.

**Track 2: Brilliance in Action: Cultivating Strong Teams**— creating equitable and sustainable jobs; attracting and retaining staff; developing a culture of equity and inclusion; improving internal communication; union best practices; developing a leadership pipeline; open book management; effective meetings for departments; building a strong workplace culture; etc.

**Track 3: Radiant Connections: Building Stronger Member Bonds**— improving the member experience; engaging current and future members; authentic connections with the local community; stories of mutual aid in action; co-op education programs; demonstrating impact and the cooperative difference; using community organizing tools to foster democracy; accessibility programs; welcoming diverse populations from all ages, classes, abilities, genders, religious affiliations, and sexual orientations; etc.

**Track 4: Luminous Leadership: Governance that Guides and Inspires**— cultivating a healthy board culture; building a diverse and inclusive board; board development and succession strategies; the role of the board in strategic planning; board self-evaluation; policy governance; board communication strategies; developing an effective board-management relationship; financial literacy and monitoring; capital campaigns; updating governance for a new era: processes, technology, revision of bylaws; etc.

**Track 5: Bright Ideas: Sparking Innovation in Cooperatives**— trends in the competitive retail market; strategic partnerships and co-op to co-op trade; supply chain challenges; investment and finance strategies for growth; increasing access to healthy food; expansion best practices; tools for driving sustainable growth; sustainability; leveraging technology to improve your co-op; etc.

#### **Addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:**

In order to survive and thrive, it is critical that food cooperatives welcome and lift up diverse voices and engage in the deep work of addressing systemic racism and oppression. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices must be core to the work and identity of our cooperative community. In the past, the CCMA Planning Committee has dedicated a specific track to addressing DEI initiatives. This year we ask that all applications address relevant diversity, equity, and inclusion activities related to

their proposed topic. We need to work on diversifying voices in our board rooms, removing implicit bias from our hiring practices, measuring our product procurement from marginalized communities, etc. The goal of this change in programming is to embed DEI thought and action into all CCMA breakout sessions.

## **SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

All proposals for CCMA 2025 must be [submitted online here](#). Proposals are due by 11:59 pm CT on Friday, February 28, 2025.

### **Session Proposal Guidelines:**

1. Session title and description (300-500 words)
2. Target audience (board members, co-op staff, managers, etc.)
3. Session format (e.g., presentation, teaching session, workshop)
4. Three active learning outcomes that the attendee can expect to take away from the presentation and apply to their co-op or job/role
5. Describe how your session will address diversity regarding race, class, gender, or other communities.
6. Name, title, organization, email, phone number, and mailing address for all presenters (only include confirmed presenters<sup>1</sup>).
7. If a panel, contact information for each proposed panelist.

If selected, your name, photo, biography, presentation title, session description, and learning objectives will be made available on the CCMA conference website. Conference attendees will receive your presentation in PDF format via a link to Google drive.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA & PROCESS**

To ensure full and fair consideration, proposals will be evaluated and selected by the CCMA Planning Committee according to the following criteria:

- Relevance – The proposal offers essential, high impact information, addresses current issues, and/or builds on concepts that are important to the target audience.
- Clarity – offers a clear description of the proposed session and learning objectives.
- Innovation – highlights creative, cutting edge, innovative ideas and displays originality.
- Application – participants will be able to learn practical tools or lessons.
- Format – co-op case studies and interactive workshops will be given preference.
- Program balance – the conference planning committee strives to create a balanced program covering a wide range of topics with diverse presenters.

Co-op Case Studies: We encourage co-ops to share their successes, failures, and lessons learned with their peers. Technical assistance providers are encouraged to partner with co-op presenters to develop proposals.

Selection Process: The CCMA Planning Committee selects a Proposal Review Committee to review CCMA breakout session proposals. UWCC will ensure that each proposal received is reviewed by at least four members of the Proposal Review Committee. Each reviewer will score each proposal against the criteria listed above on a 4-point scale (1 = poor, 2 = acceptable, 3 = very good, 4 = excellent). UWCC will collect all scores and take the average score of all four reviewers. Next UWCC staff will

develop a draft breakout session matrix with proposed sessions for each track and identify any topics that are missing from the track. Lastly, the full CCMA planning committee will review, make suggestions, and approve the final breakout sessions for the conference. **Applicants will be notified of selection decisions by March 28, 2025.**

#### Other Information

Participation as a presenter in CCMA 2025 is voluntary. In recognition of a presenter's contribution of time and effort, selected presentations will be given complimentary conference admission for up to two (2) presenters per session. If a session has more than two presenters, each presenter will receive a 50% discount on the registration fees. Each presenter remains responsible for his or her own expenses (travel, lodging, etc.).

**QUESTIONS?** Please contact Megan Webster, University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, at [mawebster@wisc.edu](mailto:mawebster@wisc.edu) or 608-890-1048. We look forward to receiving your proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> On our application, please only include confirmed speakers or panelists. Any general positions mentioned, e.g. "co-op GM" or "co-op produce manager" will be removed before final submission to the review committee.