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Call for Proposals for CCMA 2024

CCMA 2024 will take place May 30 – June 1, 2024, in Portland, Maine. The University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives welcomes proposals for breakout sessions for CCMA 2024 through **Friday, March 1, 2024**. Please read this document carefully before submitting your proposal. We look forward to reading your proposals!

2024 THEME: RISING TIDES LIFTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH COOPERATION

This year's conference theme draws inspiration from the metaphor "a rising tide lifts all boats," emphasizing the idea that as cooperatives flourish, they elevate the overall well-being and prosperity of the communities they serve. It encourages participants to explore and discuss the ways in which cooperatives serve as catalysts for positive change—fostering prosperity, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Food cooperatives contribute to the local economy while embodying values with global significance, creating a unique and interconnected community identity.

Maine is known for its stunning, rugged shores, which contribute to the state's unique coastal beauty and mirror the resilience of its people. Just as the rocky shores have weathered the elements over time, cooperators have shown a remarkable ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONFERENCE AND AUDIENCE

CCMA is an annual, three-day, national gathering of food cooperative leaders. The conference typically has 300-400 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%

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.

FORMAT

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, workshop, or lightning talk. 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.

Lightning Talk: A lightning talk is a very short talk (5-7minutes), where you share an idea or innovation that you are implementing at your co-op. Lightning talks will be held during the Innovation Sprint! CCMA Lightning Talks breakout session. There is a limit of seven speakers, with discussion breaks for attendees to ask questions, share their opinions, etc. As a speaker for one of these sessions, you will receive a discount on conference registration.

All presentations must be done in person.

At this time, we will only accept proposals for in person presentations. Breakout sessions will take place at the conference hotel on Friday, May 31 and Saturday, June 1, 2024.

TIMELINE:

- January 2, 2024: Call for Proposals opens.
- March 1, 2024: Call for Proposals closes.
- March 29, 2024: UWCC staff will notify all applicants of their proposal status via email.
- April 17, 2024: Presenters confirm participation.

BREAKOUT SESSION TRACKS

The planning committee is looking for proposals that address the following themes:

- Serving underserved and/or marginalized communities (could be populations facing housing instability, low access low income (LILA) communities, immigrant groups, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, BIPOC, etc.)
- Environmental Concerns and Climate Change
- Year of Co-ops (2025 declared as second International Year of Cooperatives)
- Fostering Democracy

CCMA 2024 will feature five tracks:

Track 1: The Foundations of Grocery Greatness – 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; merchandizing fundamentals; product mix; strategies for documenting systems and practices; prepared foods; etc.

Track 2: Being a Great Employer – creating equitable and sustainable jobs; attracting and retaining staff; developing a culture of equity and inclusion; improving internal communication; developing a leadership pipeline; open book management; effective meetings for departments; building a strong workplace culture; etc.

Track 3: Diving into Member Engagement: Deepening Connections– 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: Steering the Co-op Ship – 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; updating governance for a new era: processes, technology, revision of bylaws; etc.

Track 5: Strategies to Compete – 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 BIPOC farmers, 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 2024 must be [submitted online here](#). Proposals are due by 11:59 pm CT on Friday, March 1, 2024.

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, lightning talk)
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 presenters¹).
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 29, 2024.**

Other Information

Participation as a presenter in CCMA 2024 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. Lightning session presenters will receive a \$200 discount on CCMA registration. 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 or 608-890-1048. We look forward to receiving your proposal.

¹ 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.