



**ICCA North American Board Meeting Minutes
Sept. 12-13, 2023, In-Person Winchester, VA & Virtual**

Attendees:

<p><u>In-Person Board/Chair/Admin Attendees:</u> Isaac Wolford, ICCA Board Chair Traci Bultemeier, ICCA Board Past Chair</p> <p>Sterling Clifton, Arkansas Eugene McAvoy, Florida Karen Corrigan & Lisa Martin, Illinois Ben Wicker, Indiana David Simonson, Iowa Matthew Farace, Mid-Atlantic Region Jaime Cummings, Northeast Region Aaron Breimer & Susan Fitzgerald, Ontario Province Mary-Jane Debreuil & Jason Voogt, Prairie Provinces</p> <p>Donnie Taylor, ARA Representative</p> <p><u>Other attendees:</u> Jim Cudahy, CEO Dawn Gibas, Certifications Director Luther Smith, Chief Administrative Officer Sara Uttech, Governance Director</p>	<p><u>Virtual Board/Chair/Admin Attendees:</u> Sandy Endicott, ICCA Board Chair-Elect Ben Gleason, Iowa Justin Rowan, Kansas Todd Griffin, Kentucky Stuart Francis, Louisiana Jenell McHenry, Mid-Atlantic Region Admin Barrett Noirfalise & Andrea Rice, Missouri Scott Merritt & Connie Schroeder, Nebraska Robert Flynn, New Mexico Linda Brolin & John Christianson, North Dakota Jeanette Marvin & Peter Naumann, Northeast Region Errin Nelson, Northwest Region Kevin Otte & Janice Welsheimer, Ohio Ben Hushon, Pennsylvania Grant Briggs, Rocky Mountain Region Paul Luetjen, South Dakota Glenn Beard, Southeast Region Miranda Driver & Karl Wyant, Western Region Jessica Dentremont, Atlantic Provinces Sarah Lindsay, Jennifer Mitchell, David McKerchar, Ontario Juan Osario Hernandez & Lidia Sanchez, Mexico Joe Ziobro, EPA Leif Fixen, The Nature Conservancy</p> <p><u>ICCA Staff:</u> Zoe Brinley, Lacey Edwardson, Michele Lovejoy, Grace Moran</p>
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Monday, Sept. 11, 2023

1. Mid-Atlantic Certified Crop Advisers hosted an optional Tour of Virginia Agriculture.
2. Local Board Administrators Only Informal Meet & Greet, Half Note Lounge, Washington Hotel Lobby

Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2023

1. Chair Isaac Wolford welcomed the group and facilitated introductions and announcements, including:
 - New Incoming ICCA Board Vice Chair: Karl Wyant, Nutrien
 - New ICCA Rep. on ASA Board of Directors: Andy Knepp, Corteva, replaces Amy Asmus
2. Director of Certification Dawn Gibas provided an update of the ICCA Program (DOCUMENT 1):
 - 2023 marks the 30-year anniversary of the CCA Program
 - Seeking videos, 30th Anniversary Logo & Recognition Video Call for additional submissions, send to Hanna Jeske hjeske@sciencesocieties.org
 - 2023 vs. 2022 Certification statistics:
 - Drop in number of exams taken and also decreased CCAs, further discussion in the Exam Update and ongoing as an organization.

Certifications	2023	2022
CCAs	12,871	13,347
CPAgs	400	436
CCA Retired	356	370
CPAg Retired	29	30
CCA Candidates	82	133
4R NMS	493	478
SSp	151	149
RMS	158	151
PASp	174	161
MM	21	20
CA NSp	904	899

- Review of Certification and its Value
- Overview of Program and Opportunities
 - NRCS Technical Service Provider Program (TSP)
 - International Opportunities
 - Military, other workforce development
- Operations & Staffing
 - Computer upgrade complete, fillable forms now available for use
 - Exams – returning to window testing this year
 - Digital credentials in use with 2023 renewals
 - Added Certification staff and created Customer Support Center

3. Chief Administrative Officer Luther Smith and Vice Chair Sandy Endicott reviewed the 2023 ICCA Financials and 2024 ICCA Budget (DOCUMENT 2)

- ACTION: Motion by Dave Simonson, seconded by Gene McAvoy, to approve the 2024 ICCA Budget. Unanimous approval.

4. Certification Director Dawn Gibas facilitated a review of the Policy & Procedures Manual (DOCUMENT 4). There was consensus for the Executive Committee to develop a Task Force to review the document and update it as needed. Encourage you to look at the document. We have posted the Policy & Procedure manual that is highlighted, let Dawn or the task force know of suggested changes. Volunteer yourself or others from your board to serve. Susan Fitzgerald recommends at least one Board Administrator to serve on the Task Force, to provide perspective.

❖ *Task Force to review the Policy and Procedures Manual – If interested please contact Isaac Wolford or Dawn Gibas*

5. Director of Certification Dawn Gibas provided an update on the ICCA Exams (DOCUMENT 3)
ICCA Exam statistics:

ICCA Exams	June 2023	2022	2021
	468	608	1187

- Internet-Based Testing with immediate results to the examinee
- Return to Window Testing
 - four times/year
 - begins this coming November (testing window Nov. 1-13)
- Section Testing – coming in 2024. Examinees will have the option of completing their ICCA and Local Board Exams one section at a time. Discussion on this process. The Exec Committee has approved trying this and we will document how it goes.
- Request to the board and admins to thank their exam committees for all the work they do.
- FFA

- 2022 was the first year offering the CCA Apprentice designation to anyone who passed the Agronomy CDE exam at the FFA National Convention in Indianapolis.
 - 24 students passed from 17 states.
 - 10 students have accepted the CCA Apprenticeship (must have parent's signature)
 - They receive the Agronomy Foundations on-line course for free.
 - If they complete the course within one year of graduation from High School, they are awarded 6 months of experience on their CCA Application.
- Exam Regions: There was discussion on whether we could combine some exam regions together, but not Boards. Several examples of where it is currently working, including Prairie Provinces and the Northeast putting a table upfront that the exam committee agrees to, major crops/regions that is the focus, not smaller crops. Comments on the Exam Groupings, see suggested map in PowerPoint presentation:
 - Start thinking about this, not a vote today.
 - Consistent test across, PO by PO, see where the differences are, if they are similar, then look for alignment.
 - State lines do not follow ag production line.
 - Could we do it where if you were on a boundary you could pick which exam you want to take.
 - Benefits: Saves time/staff, exams and statistics to get the exams done, multiply by 34 currently
 - Exam committees who are willing to work with each other to find solutions. Something to think about, talk about with your boards and take it seriously. Maintain quality and gain some efficiencies for the program.
6. There was discussion on offering an Ethics course, similar to what is required as part of the Professional Soil Science Certification.
 - ACTION: Motion by Ben Wicker, seconded by Dave Simonson, for the ICCA staff to develop ethics training courses and materials for eventual consideration by the board as a CEU requirement. Motion carries with one dissent.
 7. Support Center Lead Lacey Edwardson provided the following updates:
 - Introductions and overview of the new Society Service Center: Zoe Bindley, Penny Magana, Grace Moran, and Chloe Nowicki
 - Frequently asked questions: Number of CEUs, Renewal information, CEU cycle; Future CCA questions, including how to become certified, and I just passed the exams what to do next.
 - The Credential Reviewer portion of the Policy Manual will be made into guidelines and issued as a supplement.
 - The online credential form is now a fillable PDF that can be filled out online, saved and emailed to us. Can be printed.
 8. Ag Retailers Association (ARA) Donnie Taylor provided the presentation, "How do you see the relationship between ICCA and ARA?" (DOCUMENT 4)
 9. The Nature Conservancy Leif Fixen View (DOCUMENT 5)
 10. ICCA Policy Committee Co-Chair Dennis Godar provided an update on the ICCA Policy Committee, including ICCA Congressional Visits Day and the Technical Service Provider (TSP) process. (DOCUMENT 6)
 11. The Environmental Protection Agency Joseph Ziobro provided an update on the EPA, highlighting water quality programs (DOCUMENT 7)
 12. CEO Jim Cudahy provided an overview of the ICCA Marketing Plan (DOCUMENT 8):
 - Overall number of CCAs have declined.
 - Consistent workforce development issues.
 - New exam registrations dropped significantly.
 - Opportunity out there to tell the CCA story better.
 - New tactics to drive marketing.

Marketing brainstorming: (list of comments and topics discussed)

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR BENEFITS OF HOLDING A CERTIFICATION?

- Credibility: card-carrying gives you a stamp certified to make a recommendations, experience, and education to make appropriate directives
- Consulting: financial benefits to me. People will often times select me over another consultant because I am certified, and they are not.
- Networking: Events
- Continuing Education
- Amigos – friends
- Have we asked these audiences what they perceive are the benefits: Students, Employers, Growers
- Potential/Opportunity: financial opportunities, keys to unlock access to additional opportunities, services I can provide or add to my business that will add new sources of revenue.
- Competitive advantage
- Acknowledgement that they are equal (younger generation): want to change the world and they want to hear it.
- CCAs are the translators of science into profitability.
- Certification is the “ticket to the show” in some of our markets. Being certified is an edge for job seekers and helps to justify expertise in our regulatory environment that often requires it.
- Access to information, new programs, new pests, diseases, handle the soil with techniques.
- Status to be certified especially in our global environment.
- Part of the group. You belong.

WHAT DRIVES THE DECISION TO REGISTER FOR THE CCA PROGRAM?:

- Somebody they respect recruits them and tells them to take the exam, become a CCA for the professional reputation.
- One of the most effective ways is for someone in a leadership role to ask and/or encourage employees or colleagues to get certified.
- It was a way to compete with the engineers and geologists because they have a license.
- Helped to define a profession, makes you more professional.
- Company recognizes it or you recognize it yourself, take responsibility. Not just another field scout, taking your professional career seriously and want to go to the next step, next level of a professional agronomist.
- Continuing Education requirement. We have to maintain and go to the professional opportunities that are out there.
- Incentives. Bonus or 10% increase in salary to get your CCAs, scrutinized on environmental issues.
- University of Florida counted certification for Promotion & Tenure.
- Fear and competition. Drove early adopters in the program.
- Well-rounded. CCAs helped me do more than just the singular degree program.
- Because no one would go to the doctor MD, realtor certified. Why would you not hire a crop consultant that was not certified to manage your million-dollar field.
- Ability to serve my clients. Something that would set myself apart, and CEUs.
- Stack those things that will give me an advantage. I have the knowledge, but certification will help me back that up on top of my CCA. Someone sees the logo and that is where we need to go (CCA logo, shirt).
- You get one chance to put that crop into the field. If you are advising someone you are impacting their finances.
- Continuing Education. We’re out there. If you (farmer) are not up to date on everything that’s okay we’ve got you.

WHO (WHAT) ARE KEY THINGS HAVE INFLUENCE?:

- Peer pressure. Enough CCAs that go into a job, there is a bit of pressure, overt or subtle, that you belong. That you can do this.
- Employers/Boss – incentivizing employers to have on staff, including ag retailers.
- Errors & Omission insurance – have certified people gets the premium down.
- Had to be a CCA. Farmland Checkoff paid by the government.
- CCA code of ethics

- Nutrient management specialties, Lake Erie watershed regulations into place, to make sure this is what we are doing.
- Ranch manager, if we've ever recognized these sales organizations who have made the asks for the staff.
- If you know you are going to have access or opportunity to becoming a CCA/TSP. Straightest path forward.
- Post-Secondary Agronomy advisers. Senior seminar/career development. Giving them access.
- Local boards pay for students to take the exam (scholarships).

TOUCHPOINTS WITH POTENTIAL CANDIDATES:

- Guest speaker at local university/community college agronomy club
- Ag business students – go after them earlier get them trained so they are passing and not failing. Go to the Ag Econ department – broaden the tent. Supply management could benefit. Lots of kids take Crops 100, but few will take soils. It's a hard class. Need math more than chemistry. How do we go after them and encourage/promote the program?
- Iowa State Clubs – pizza parties, etc. – try and go to the advisers, which kids maybe are more in tune. We did a webinar where we invited kids to come on, word spread. Going to Community Colleges, Private Colleges that are picking up Agriculture and related disciplines.
- Touchpoint after they pass the test – Ask Them. What was your reason for becoming a CCA?
- Newly minted CCAs, while they have the exuberance of just having passed, make use of them to get others excited about the programs, social media, to get others involved.
- A lot of member companies hire a fleet of interns, crop scouting, etc. moving up into those positions. Exposure stage to help them advance up the career ladder.
- South Dakota and Tech schools are on our board – someone will go give our presentation. CCA video. Update that PPT, why be a CCA. Three of us rotate around, the Sout Dakota CCA board 2-year tech school grad 4-year grad, offer to pay their fee to take the exam. This will get you started in this industry. May not have the experience yet.
- We give the process to the adviser who points out the program.
- What type of materials would make your job easier: better video, 3-4 minutes, too long now. AFA the Ag Future of America, U of I students go to that. 8,000 students at hundreds of universities, etc. Non-agronomy students

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS – WHAT ORGS, MEETINGS DO THEY ATTEND, GATHER ONLINE?:

- Can we go to a tradeshow or conference, or geofence?
- ISU athletics, ads we target farmers, we take care of farmers, talk to your local CCAs – getting heard.
- Social media tribes
- Conversations they are having with customers.
- Ag Fraternities – use your alumni of those organizations.
- International students: looking to emigrate to US/Canada
- Mid-Atlantic Crop School, sponsor a reception there, seeking out credits, independent people/retailers and government.
- Take advantage of your Extension colleagues, share a slide about the program to show on-screen as people enter the room and/or at coffee break time, include QR Code to the program.
- State Agribusiness associations – integrating into their individual programs, young professionals, Leadership development program. Farm Bureau

CCAs WHO ARE NEWLY MINTED

- Mid to late 20s
- More female
- FFAs
- VoTech schools, Commuters
- College graduates
- Land Grants
- Competition from the land grants
- More jobs: soil health, environmental, improve the environment.
- They want to change the world.

WHAT TOOLS DO YOU NEED?

- Short video
- Put stuff online to share.
- Local CCA gave the top state winner \$1,000, all the other high schools are going to notice. Agronomy Contest.
- Presentation state FFA conference. Workshop at state FFA convention. Escape room. The case of the missing yield. Puzzles that gave the clues. One puzzle was about the CCAs. They knew who the culprit was. Sherlock Holmes, Crop Detective Academy “Certified Crop Adviser” – fun. Goal to get that together. Send that out to the high schools FFA. Translate to social media. Share. Soils sleuth.
- Agronomy CDE. FFA – Dekalb award. At a high school or college level, the state board at the land grant CCA at the adviser of that group of students. FFA adviser picks the student.
- Florida, Indiana, Iowa, California, Mid-Atlantic doing scholarships.
- Scholarships 4 students, 4 agronomy faculty, junior college to university, we stick to undergrads, we have a dedicated application on our website, committee that reviews and selects the winner. They are recognized at the Western Region Award show.
- Supporting faculty – young professional award. CCA within 5 years. Nominated by their peers.
- Farm Bureau works with our CCA Board to identify the young professional.

WHAT IN PARTICULAR HAVE YOU FOUND EFFECTIVE IN YOUR MARKETING?

- Ontario, Marketing Committee success in competition. Anyone who had their CCA logo into the pot, drop it in the bucket. CCA decal on their vehicle. Hashtag, CCA that we could track and have some type of competition. Drawing for an annual conference trip there.
- CCA Week – hyper-focused. Everybody does a presentation in your local high school/community colleges.
- National CCA Day? Proclamation, P.R. around it.
- Dekalb nominate a CCA.
- Agribusiness and CCA/CEU show, have a raffle/drawing.
- Social Media, digital marketing campaign, we get much higher engagement rates out of digital marketing/ads vs. social media.
- Promotional socks work.
- Ohio ag event: CCA signs on the cardboard. Employee CCAs, gave them the Zip ties to hang on their tents.
- Hard plastic 2 foot x 18 inches “We employ Iowa CCAs” with the CCA log on in. 8.5 x 11 that the CCAs can put in the window in their office or pickup.
- Need more swag. Bottle opener.
- Trowels that say CCA on it.
- Work with our commodity organizations. Soybean staff, submit articles, podcasts, CEUs for CCAs. Free advertising with the local soybean association.
- Market study – asks questions that we could turn into product, science taking hold, what’s working what’s not. Of interest to the academics, turn into good PR. Exposure to the CCA program.
- Best swag, soybean and soy alliance, chemical gloves, PARK hours, huge logo
- Exam preparation materials are basically non-existent. People are scared of taking the exam for fear of failing. People know about CCA, but do not want to fail the exam.
- <https://wrcca.org/scholarships-honorariums>
- Nebraska provides grants to college students taking tests.
- Go to the employers.
- Go to the Community Colleges, be more engaged.
- Sponsorship, talking at Extension meetings, lots of farmers at extension meetings.
- 30 second videos, recent videos, who passed the exam, how easy/hard it was and why they did it.
- FFA
- Company supporting their employees, number of CCAs of staff as %, competition.
- Two target audiences: Farmers (value of CCAs), those who should take the exam. Drive interest with farmers and those who should register, use the video, short tweet, spin it out.
- Onboard giftbag for new CCAs swag-bag.
- Ontario annual conference – anyone got an air tag with the CCA logo, when you lose your keys walking the field.
- Recognize the CCA who have been CCAs for 30 years, backpack, 30 years

- Iowa does every 5 years, Indiana used to with a badge ribbon.
- National advertising, target high school students, people coming out of college, farmers.
- Relationship building with grower commodity group asking for content: Digital Toolkit, material, magazine, article ideas, receptive if we gave them something to put in
- If we are going to try to get our retailers back in need the field days
- Make it sexy.
- Two directions: we need to look at the top down, back to the retailer establishing the support of the program. The bottom up, need to get the grower to realize the importance.
- College program – getting students signed up for the exam.
- Survey data – brought to ag retailer, shows them how much better agronomists they are to solve problems.
- Email signature line, logo
- QR code – splash page.

Wednesday, September 13, 2023

13. CEO Jim Cudahy presented the recent ASA Board of Directors Strategic Planning Meeting which included the ICCA Exec Committee (DOCUMENT 9)

- ❖ *ACTION: Consensus to form a Task Force to explore how CCA membership in ASA would be beneficial – If interested please contact Isaac Wolford or Dawn Gibas*

14. Chief Administrative Officer Luther Smith reviewed the current ICCA Strategic Plan (DOCUMENT 10)

- GOAL A: Promote the value of the CCA Certification
- GOAL B: Increase collaboration with key stakeholders to grow the recognition of CCAs as leaders in the industry and provide a bridge between science, production and certification end-users
- GOAL C: Increase Participation of CCA's in local, national and international boards and committee activities
- ACTION: Motion by Jamie Cummings, seconded by Gene McAvoy, to form a task force to investigate reinstatement of certification. Unanimous approval. Lisa Martin would like the committee to consider offering some CCA-type program to those who go into management to keep their CCA status. The ICCA exec committee meeting with look into this.

- ❖ *The investigation of reinstatement of certification will be part of the Task Force to review the Policy and Procedures Manual – If interested please contact Isaac Wolford or Dawn Gibas*

15. Chair Isaac Wolford and Certification Director Dawn Gibas provided an update on the FFA Agronomy Career Development Event (DOCUMENT 11).

- Isaac proctored the exam at FFA Nationals last year. Built around the CCA Performance Objectives.
- FFA Day at the 2023 ASA Annual Meeting – delayed until the 2024 ASA Annual Meeting in San Antonio. The Committee will put together an outline and timeline for projects.

- ❖ *If interested in serving on the Committee, contact Dawn Gibas or Traci Bultemeier.*
- ❖ *If interested in the FFA Career Development Events, contact Isaac Wolford.*

16. Certification Director Dawn Gibas provided an update on CCA International Opportunities (DOCUMENT 12), including:

- Brazil
- South Florida/Puerto Rico/Caribbean
- Malaysia
- Honduras
- Zambia/Malawi – Africa
- Others, including DCA Outdoor
- Juan Manuel Osorio Hernandez provided an update on CCA Mexico
- ACTION: Motion by Karen Corrigan, seconded by Jamie Cummings, to proceed to put both of our exams and Performance Objectives in Spanish as needed. Unanimous approval. Sandy suggested that we use a translation

service to get this moving faster and we will look into this. Dawn will prioritize the states where this is needed most, including Western Region, Texas, and the Southeast Region.

17. Chair Isaac Wolford recognized and thanked Past Chair Traci Bultemeier, Pioneer Seeds with a plaque.
18. Vice Chair Sandy Endicott discussed the 2024 ICCA North American Board Meeting and options to host it in North Florida. Contact Sandy with ideas for North Florida. There were additional discussions about the board meetings that included:
- Annual CCA Conference. Many states are already holding a state conference, perhaps partner with that state, use that as a way to showcase what they are doing. Meetings are sometimes in the winter. Suggestion for quarterly zoom meetings, one in-person.
 - Who has a summer conference? Some have field day events that we could partner with.
 - In-person meeting: Pre-harvest. Not during growing season. Farm Progress is in August so avoid that date. Would it make sense to put this meeting as part of the ASA Annual Meeting – concern that it could be busy with professors/students. If we could create an Industry Day at the ASA Annual Meeting, that could also be a part of the reason to have the in-person CCA Board meeting there. We will discuss at an upcoming Exec Board Meeting and communicate.
 - Suggestion to hold 4 board meetings a year, March, June, September, December with one of the months face-to-face. There was a suggestion to hold the face-to-face meeting at a hotel near to the airport while the tours could be in more rural areas.

❖ *Task Force to review ICCA Board Meeting schedule and structure – If interested please contact Isaac Wolford or Dawn Gibas*

19. Reminder: ICCA of the Year Nominations are due Oct. 31: www.agronomy.org/awards/view/131

Consensus to adjourn at 12:45 pm