

The background of the slide is a photograph of a night sky featuring a vibrant aurora borealis. The aurora consists of several bright, vertical streaks of light in shades of white and yellow, set against a deep blue, starry sky. Below the sky, the dark silhouettes of evergreen trees and snow-covered mountain peaks are visible, creating a serene and atmospheric scene.

Certification of compliance with co-operative practices

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Structure of Presentation

1. Why evaluate co-operative life?
2. How do we evaluate co-operative life?
3. Certification: how it works?
4. Why it is a helpful branding mechanism?
5. Why it was not yet implemented?
6. Conclusion



Why evaluate co-operative life?

Most performing coops:

“Where managers integrate cooperative values and principles in day to day practices”

Daniel Côté



Why evaluate co-operative life?


- How to integrate co-operative values into management practices?
- In addition:
 - Once we know the good management practices how do we convince managers to adopt them?



Why evaluate co-operative life?

Answers from certification pilot project participants:

- To better know Coop advantages
- More relevant information on stakes
- Improve the sharing of information
- Improve decision-making process
- To work closer with the stakeholders
- Evaluation enables continuous improvement



2. How do we evaluate co-operative life?

Three degrees of evaluation

1. Auto-evaluation
2. Audit
3. Certification



Auto-evaluation

- ≠ external visibility but:
- Better self-knowledge
- To understand its distinction
- Better knowledge of the members
- “Patronage allocation” not the only element of distinction



Co-operative audit

- Acknowledged auditor?
- Published?



Certification of compliance

3 advantages

1. Commitment of the board
2. Auditor
 - External
 - Internationally accredited
3. Visibility



Why a certification tool?

A recall:

“Once we know the good management practices how do we convince managers to adopt them?”



3. Certification: how it works?

- Structure of tool
 - 7 principles
 - Dimensions
 - 3 degrees



Certification: how it works?

- 7 co-operative principles
 1. Voluntary and open membership
 2. Democratic member control
 3. Member economic participation
 4. Autonomy and independence
 5. Education, training and information
 6. Co-operation among co-operatives
 7. Concern for community



Certification: how it works?

- Example with the 5th principle (...)
 - Definition
 - “Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.”



Certification: how it works?

- Example with the 5th principle (...)
 - Dimensions assessed
 1. Information, training, consultation and mobilization of **board members**
 2. Information, training, consultation and mobilization of **members**
 3. Information, training, consultation and mobilization of **employees**
 4. Promotion of the co-operative form of business among young people
 5. Promotion of the co-operative form of business



Certification: how it works?

For each dimension we developed 3 levels of requirements :

- Gold
- Silver
- Bronze



Certification

- Testimony from participant:
 - “I now understand better what makes us different, which makes it easier to showcase.”
 - Martin Lemay,
Caisse Desjardins Sud de Lotbinière



Certification added value

1. Good coverage of 7 principles
2. Stresses responsibility of the board
3. External and accredited auditor
4. External visibility



4. Why it is a helpful branding mechanism?

1. Putting the spotlight on the best co-ops
2. Challenging other co-ops
 - Strengthening the whole movement



5. Why it was not yet implemented?

- Developed in 2003
- Studies proved the cooperatives will
- But some Quebec cooperative federations were not interested:
 1. “Certification” branding could lead to a public opinion that there are “good” and “bad” coops
 2. Could lead to show that there are “weak” and “strong” coops within the same federation
 3. Could lead to bad competition between coops
 4. Could lead to control from government and banks.



Why it was not yet implemented?

- Quebec apex organization (CQCM) chose to modify the tool from certification to auto-evaluation tool
- As expected, without the “certification” reward the tool has rested on the shells.
- ICA was interested in, but the project was not prioritised yet



ICA commitment

“The Board believes that having access to such a tool, which can validate and demonstrate the distinctiveness of co-operatives in a consistent and measurable way throughout the world, is something that may be of real value to ICA members.”

February 2005



6. Conclusion

- Certification tool exists :
 - with 3 levels of certification for continuous improvement (gold, silver and bronze)
 - For 3 sectors (consumers, workers and producers)



Conclusion

- Blueprint 2020 could be a good timing for certification?
 1. Elevate **participation** within membership and governance to a new level
 3. Build the co-operative message and secure the co-operative **identity**

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with co-operative practices

Thank you for your listening!

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