



Iowa Institute for
Cooperatives

CO-OPVIEWS

News and information for the benefit of Iowa cooperatives.

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Update From the Hill

Rebecca Boyer, Director of Government Affairs



The 2024 legislative session will be here before we know it. Starting back up in January, the capitol will once again be a busy place where different organizations will be lobbying for fixes to existing issues or new ideas to better their industries. Iowa Institute for Cooperatives will continue to be the voice for Iowa's cooperatives.

We anticipate some issues from previous years that did not get resolved will come up again this session including carbon capture pipelines, tax

reform, and funding levels of different state programs. We also anticipate some new issues to come this session like proposing changes to the Iowa Grain Indemnity Fund.

Regardless of the issues that come up, IIC has a very sound policy resolution book that gives us guidance on what issues to engage in on behalf of our members and allows us to stay out of fights we don't need to be in.

Once again, we will be co-hosting a Welcome Back Reception on January 9th, from 3:30-5:30 PM to welcome legislators back to the capitol before they get to work for the session. The reception will be at the Embassy Suites in Des Moines and provides a great opportunity to connect with legislators before session ramps up. RSVP to the IIC office if you plan to attend.

Be sure to be on the look out for our weekly Legislative Update newsletter once session begins. This newsletter provides a general overview of what happened at the capitol that week and an up to date tracker of the issues IIC is engaged in on behalf of our members.

If you have questions about specific issues or want to make sure you're on the Legislative Update subscription list, contact Rebecca at rboyer@iowainstitute.coop.

PLAN TO ATTEND

2024 WELCOME BACK RECEPTION

January 9 | 3:30 - 5:30pm

Downtown Embassy Suites | 101 E

Locust Street, Des Moines IA

Come and meet our legislative

representatives and welcome them

to the upcoming legislative session.

RSVP to IIC office at 515-292-2667.

CO-OP DAY AT THE CAPITOL

February 7 | 7:30-9:00

Iowa State Capitol | 1007 E Grand

Ave, Des Moines, IA

Meet with Iowa Legislators and

discuss key topics impacting

cooperatives.



Passing the Baton for Growing Cooperatives

With Ed Westra, General Manager, Hull Co-op Association

Ed Westra, General Manager of Hull Co-op Association since 2005, is about to hang-up his hat and “try” to retire—but he’ll be the first to tell you, “Trying to turn off the co-op in me is going to be hard, and after nearly 45 years in the cooperative world, it will take some transition.”

Ed first started his cooperative career working for a regional coop in 1979. A few years later, he returned to his home town of Hull, Iowa, to work at the local cooperative and hasn’t turned back.

During his long career, Ed has not only witnessed a lot of change in the agriculture industry, but also has had a front row seat to the impact and challenges created by those changes for cooperatives.

“You have to have a vision of where you are going and a plan of how to get there,” Ed shares about how he and his board and team have thrived as a single location farmer’s cooperative. Guided by Ed’s clear vision for the future, Hull Co-op has quadrupled volumes in the last 19 years during his management.

Ed shares the cooperative had many different services wrapped up in four departments originally. Ed made the departments more specialized, creating eight departments based on the specific type of work or area. He focused on improving each department’s costs and efficiencies. Ed knew that adding departments would make management more complex, but as he says, “Things would get a little boring if all you did was grain and feed and agronomy.”

THE CATALYST OF GROWTH

New technology is one of the key tools that accelerated Hull Co-op’s growth. Ed has continually embraced advances in technology for the benefit of the cooperative’s members.

“In 1983, Hull Co-op bought an Apple III computer for \$3,500 to download soil samples, field planning and utilize the available nutrition programs. The investment was fairly large for its day, but it was the beginning point for producer utilization of the power of computing.”

Now, technology has moved directly into the palms of cooperative employees’ hands.

“Today, our grain managers can monitor grain anywhere from their phone,” Ed continues. “This allows us to leave our grain dump site vacant in the off season. Farmers can pull up, follow the directions on the scale and dump their own grain and everything is captured by our technology. Our applicators know exactly where and how much to apply by using the field maps on their iPad. Our truck drivers operate the scale remotely from iPads in their trucks.”

Ed recognizes the impact this technology has on the bigger picture of serving member customers.

“By investing in technology, we have become very specialized,” Ed states. “Investing is what pays off for our bottom line and our members.”

A STEADFAST MISSION

With Hull Co-op being a single location over the years, some may have expected it to merge and become part of an ever larger organization, but remaining independent is an

intentional decision for the cooperative.

“The cooperative and its members have to work hard to not become merger fodder in today’s environment,” Ed admits. “Bigger is not necessarily better, but better is definitely better—and that is what we have been working hard on. The biggest concern with growing larger is you may lose the cooperative’s mission of putting the local members and community first. In my opinion, geographically dispersed cooperatives find it’s hard to stay close and service the individual customer.”

One of the ways Hull Co-op stays close to its members is through the management of their cooperatives’ balance sheet.

“Our board wants names on equity. They believe membership is more than a piece of paper, but actual investment in the cooperative,” Ed states. “It suits our situation here as a local co-op. We don’t want to be just another place to do business, we want members to say, ‘I am doing business with the company I own.’”

The investments members make in the cooperative also help bolster their own success.

“A member’s investment into a cooperative is part of and supports his investment in his farm operation, both of which are long-term,” Ed says. “Just as a farmer is looking down the road for the next generation’s success, so are cooperatives. One generation is here to serve the next—and that is worth investing.”

Ed shares that helping members understand the need for and purpose of investing in the cooperative helps them feel their ownership in the business.

LEADING THE CHARGE

Just as it’s important for members to recognize the “why” behind Hull Co-op, employees should also feel connected to the cooperative’s mission—especially leaders in the business.

In January, Ed will share Hull Co-op’s purpose and mission with its new leader, Evan Wielenga. While he’s still not sure what retirement looks like or how to turn off the “cooperative brain,” one thing is certain: Ed is not worried about the future of Hull Co-op.

“Cooperatives will always be here,” Ed says. “It’s a lot like a relay race. I’ve run my part of the race; now it’s time for Evan to take off and run his part with new ideas and vision. As long as he has his eyes on where he is going, he’ll get Hull to where they need to be.”



Ed Westra, General Manager,
Hull Co-op Association

2023 ANNUAL MEETING

STAND
OUT

STEP
UP

Another successful annual meeting in the books for Iowa Institute of Cooperatives.

This year's Iowa Institute of Cooperatives 73rd annual meeting did just what our theme exclaimed - *Stand Out and Step Up*. Over 270 attendees from 70 different IIC member organizations stepped up and participated in a day filled with learning, networking and energizing each other to stand out.

Our guest speaker, Ray Starling, Aimpoint Advisor and author of *Farmers Vs. Foodies*, provided a thought provoking conversation as to how foodies are impacting public policy through their influence and growing legislative influence and what this means to the American farmer.

Along with our traditional industry breakout sessions, we proudly inducted Don Miller of Northwest Communications and Chuck Schafer of North Iowa Cooperative into the Iowa Cooperative Hall of Fame.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig also stopped by the annual meeting to show his support for Iowa cooperatives and to encourage leaders to continue to stand out and step up for Iowa and their members.

Thank you for your continued support of the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives as a valued partner and looking forward to all 2024 has to offer.



Newly inducted members of the Iowa Cooperative Hall of Fame for 2023, Don Miller (right) and Chuck Schafer (left).



Attendees gaining insights to how the farming industry is being impacted by outside influences from guest speaker, Ray Starling, Aimpoint Advisor and author.



Making a surprise guest appearance, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Naig.

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2024

SAVE the DATE! Start your new year out right by developing new skills or networking with your colleagues by attending one of these IIC sponsored events. Scan the QR code below or visit our website, iowainstitute.coop, and register under the “Events” tab. For more information, please contact our main office at 515-292-2667.

Director Certification Programs - Phases I - IV

Using the winter months to give our directors a leg up in their role to ensure their cooperative's success. Whether you are new to your position or need a refresher, these sessions are built just for you!

- **Phase I** looks at the cooperative organizational structure and historical perspective of cooperatives ending with an overview of Iowa's cooperative code. As well as, director legal responsibilities, management of teamwork and separation of duties.

- **Phase II** helps directors learn about Board management, establishing a direction, your role in corporate planning as well as tools for handling different situations.

- **Phase III** provides an in-depth look at financial statements cooperatives utilize to drive decision making. Geared to help directors in their role and the impact they have on financial planning.

- **Phase IV** delves into the directors' role with developing managers and performance evaluation systems.

See below for a date and time near you.

Phase III

January 10, 2024 | 8:30 am - 3:30 pm

Crossroads Pavillion Center 301 34th Ave.

Sheldon, IA

Registration deadline is Jan. 5

Phase III & IV

January 30 - 31, 2024

Kings Point Resort, 1520 East Lakeshore Dr.

Storm Lake, IA

Registration deadline is Jan. 26

Phase I & II

February 1 - 2, 2024

Hilton Garden Inn | 7213 Nordic Dr.

Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Registration deadline is Jan. 26

2024 Mid-Manager Program

January 23 - 24, 2024

Location TBD

More information to come.

Board Presidents

February 6 | 9:00 – 4:00pm

2405 SE Creekview Dr.

Ankeny, IA

The morning session includes speakers on current relevant topics. After, lunch the board presidents hold an open forum where they raise questions or topics that their board or cooperative is facing. We have experts in the room, but often the best answers come from the other board members in attendance.

