Certification Program Governance:

Where are we now?

December 2013

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Introduction

In 2008, SeaCrest conducted an online survey of professional certification programs to gather data on issues related to program governance, an area in need of further investigation particularly given its important role in the accreditation process. In 2013, we conducted a follow-up survey to re-evaluate issues related to program governance and investigate changes in trends five years after the initial survey was conducted and analyzed.

The survey design included topics based on frequently asked questions related to the structure, composition and organization of certification boards as well as questions related to accreditation of certification programs.

SeaCrest invited a diverse list of certification organizations representing different industries, budget sizes, and certificant bodies to participate in the survey. A total of 84 representatives from certification programs responded to the survey.

The survey results give us an overall picture of what a typical certification board looks like, how it is structured, and some of the significant challenges currently facing certification boards. In a larger sense, the results of both the 2008 and 2013 surveys establish a benchmark for certifying agencies to evaluate, and improve if necessary, their overall governance procedures.

Executive Summary

Respondents provided valuable data on 51 questions and a variety of subject areas related to the governance of certification programs. The Executive Summary highlights findings in major areas such as size, board composition, accreditation status, structure, autonomy, etc.

Organization Size

- 54% have 2 – 4 staff members
- 42% have less than 500 certificants while 16% have more than 6,000 certificants
- 73% have 5 or fewer credentials
- 48% started a new certification program in the last 5 years

Certification Board Composition

- 40% have 10 or fewer board members while 88% have 15 or fewer members
- 41% include representation from a parent association and 24% of parent association representatives have voting privileges
- 38% prefer volunteer service to the organization prior to certification board service
- 79% require certificant representation on the certification board up from 65% in 2008

Pubic Members

The responses show that public members are becoming more prevalent and valued.

- 80% have a public member, up from 75% in 2008
- 14% have more than 1 public member, up from 10% in 2008
- 80% of public members have full voting privileges, up from 72% in 2008

Accreditation

- 49% are accredited by ANSI, ABSNC, or NCCA, up from 46% in 2008
- 18% are currently seeking accreditation, up from 11% in 2008
- Only 53% of programs that are NOT accredited are planning to apply in the next 5 years, down from 61% in 2008

Governance Structure

There is a shift toward more for-profit programs, fewer stand-alone certifications, and less dependence on certification as the primary revenue source.

Autonomy

- 57% of respondents indicated the certification board (within parent organization) is responsible for SME selection
- 43% said the certification program is a separately incorporated legal entity
- 27% said the certification program is part of a parent organization, but has complete independence regarding certification decisions
- 26% said the certification board (within a parent organization) is responsible for hiring staff & consultants (down from 47% in 2008)

Selection Process

- 57% of certification board members are elected or appointed by the certification board, up from 44% in 2008
- 19% have most or all certification board members elected by certificants / membership
- 15% have most or all members of the certification board appointed by a parent organization

Challenges

Responses from the 2013 survey indicate that challenges are more focused on building employer / industry support and defining the value of the program.

| Top Challenges in 2013	Top Challenges in 2008
Increasing employer support	Marketing
Creating industry support	Managing growth
Defining and promoting value of cert program	International
Recruiting qualified board members/leadership succession	Competition
Competition from other certification / certificate programs	Implementing new business model or managing org structure change
Marketing	Recertification / continuing competence issues
Cost Containment	

Organization & Training

- 79% of certification board members receive orientation or training
- Only 40% of orientation / training is conducted in person
- 40% conduct board evaluation, down from 48% in 2008
- 89% report the board understands the certification process, up from 72%
- 21% of organizations would support sending board members to additional training, down from 51% in 2008

Meetings

In person meetings are still important, but there are fewer of them each year, which could be a reflection of the economy and / or an increased adoption of technology.
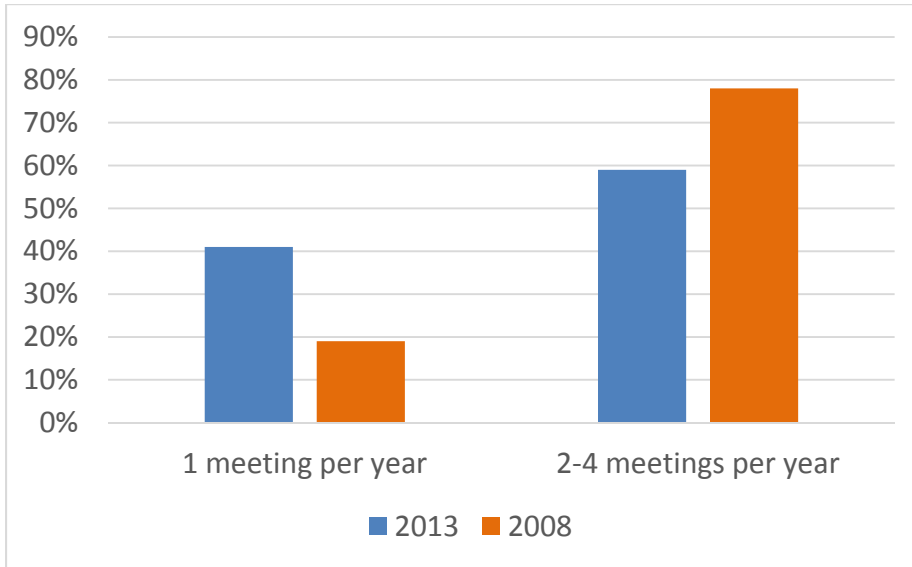
- Virtual meetings are increasing in use but used less often than traditional conference calls
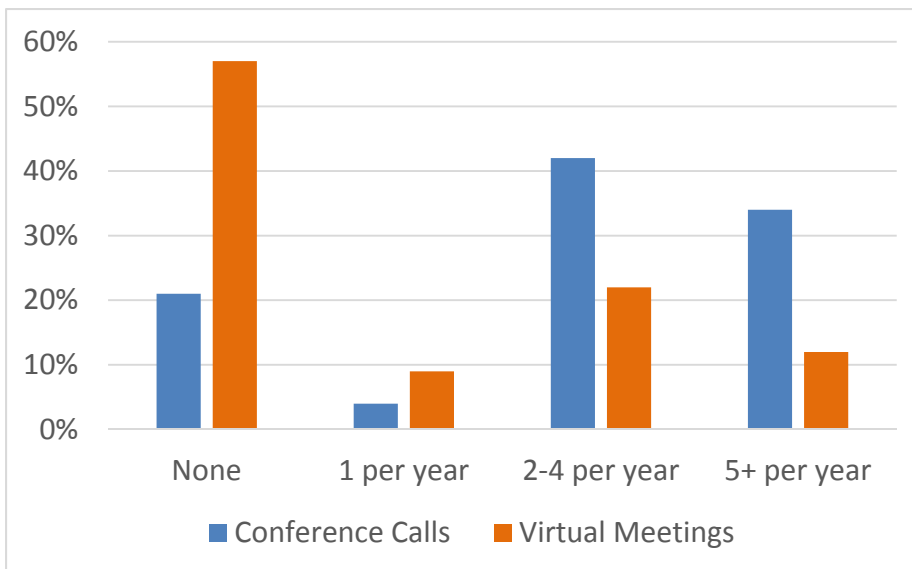
Survey Results

Structure

Check all statements that accurately describe the governance structure of the organization's certification program.

Not-for-profit - 501(c)(6)	**48%**
Not-for-profit - 501(c)(3)	34%
For profit	5%
The certification board is a separately incorporated legal entity	35%
The certification board (or certification council, certification committee, etc) is part of a parent association/trade organization/company and is not separately incorporated	33%
The SOLE purpose of the organization is certification	29%
The PRIMARY purpose of the organization is certification	19%
Certification provides the largest single source of revenue for the organization	41%
Certification is one purpose, but the organization also provides education, membership or other services	42%
Certification is not the primary revenue source for the organization	19%

Please choose which statement best describes the certification program's level of administrative independence:

The certification board is a separately incorporated legal entity with NO influence from outside organizations.	**43%**
The certification board is a separately incorporated legal entity however a majority of board members are appointed by one outside organization.	0%
The certification board/committee is part of a parent association/organization/company, but has complete and total independence regarding certification decisions.	27%
The certification board/committee is part of a parent association/organization/company and has SOME independence regarding certification decisions.	15%
The certification board/committee is part of a parent association/organization/company which must approve all certification board/committee decisions	10%
Other	6%

Composition & Terms

The certification board currently consists of:

Less than 10 members	41%
10-15 members	**48%**
16-20 members	4%
More than 20 members	8%

Are members of the certification board / committee required to hold your credential(s)?

Yes, all certification board members are required to hold the credential(s)	28%
Yes, a majority of certification board members are required to hold the credential(s)	**42%**
Yes, some of the certification board members are required to hold the credential(s)	10%
No, certification board members are not required to hold the credential(s)	20%

Does a member of a parent board serve on the certification board?

Yes	29%
No	**41%**
Not applicable	30%

Does this parent board member have full voting privileges?

Yes	24%
No	11%
N/A	**65%**

How many public members serve on the certification board?

0	18%
1	**66%**
2	8%
More than 2	8%

Does the public member have full voting privileges?

Yes	**81%**
No	3%
N/A	17%

Does the organization have plans to add additional public members to the certification board?

Yes	13%
No	**76%**
N/A	11%

What is the term length for non-officer board members?

1-2 years	25%
3-5 years	**62%**
More than 6 years	13%

What is the term limit for non-officer board members (converted to total number of years)?

Less than 6 years	32%
6-10 years	**49%**
More than 10 years	19%

Selection and Criteria of Board Members

Has your organization established formal criteria/prerequisites for board members (educational requirements, experience requirements, previous volunteer experience, etc.)?

Yes	**57%**
No	43%

Does the organization require board members to serve in another volunteer role for the organization before serving on the board?

Yes	9%
No	**61%**
Preferred but not formally required	30%

What is the process for selecting new members to the certification board?

All members are appointed by the certification board/committee	19%
All members are elected by the certification board/committee	**39%**
All members are appointed by the parent organization	8%
All members are appointed by an outside organization	0%
A majority of members are appointed by the parent organization	6%
A majority of members are appointed by an outside organization	1%
All members are elected by the organization's certificants and/or membership	8%
A majority of members are elected by the organizations certificants and/or membership	12%
Other: • A majority of members are appointed by the certification board/committee. • Separate appointments committee appoints members to the board • A majority of members are appointed by the certification board, some are elected by the certified population • Most are elected by the certification Board, two are appointed and the Board approves	8%

• Chair, Vice Chair and Public Member appointed by President of the Association. All others members are appointed by their respective specialty certifying board (18 members)	

If members of the certification board are elected, please choose the option that best describes how candidates are selected:

Candidates are selected by an independent nominating committee	10%
Candidates are selected by a nominating committee that was appointed by the certification board / committee	33%
Candidates are selected by the board/certification committee	**35%**
Other (please describe): • Members are appointed • All candidates who apply are placed on the ballot • Candidates may be solicited by the Executive Director • Candidates are nominated by certified population, final nominees are selected by certification board. • Candidates are nominated by certified practitioners • Self-nominating • Candidates are selected by a nominating committee that was appointed by the certification board, then candidates are sent to the certificant body requesting support for the nominations with write-in opportunities. Top candidates are sent to the board for election. • Candidates are selected by parent organization and voted on by membership • Nominations are taken from state chapters, self-nominations, certification board, and staff. Nominees are ranked and voted upon • Nomination from subsidiary organizations • Anyone who self-nominates will be on the ballot • CNA Board has a different model	23%

Board Meetings

How many in-person, scheduled meetings does the certification board / committee have each year?

1	41%
2-4	**59%**
5 or more	0%

How many meetings does the certification board / committee have by telephone conference call each year?

0	21%
1	4%
2-4	**42%**
5 or more	34%

How many virtual meetings does the board have each year (including screen sharing or video conferencing?)

0	57%
1	9%
2-4	22%
5 or more	12%

Training, Orientation, and Evaluations

Do new certification board / committee members receive formal orientation and/or training?

Yes	79%
No	21%

How is the training/orientation provided? (check all that apply)

Orientation materials sent to new board members.	77%
In-person training provided prior to first board meeting.	41%
Observance of at least one board meeting prior to start of term.	22%
Other (please specify): • Board Development and orientation workshop conducted via web-based meeting • Orientation by conference call prior to first in-person meeting of board • 2 Seminar conference calls with screen sharing moderated by a third party • Virtual Training • Testing company provides training session on item writing virtually or in person • WebEx orientation session prior to first meeting • Mentoring using the Mentoring the Stars book and pairing with a mentor; In-person orientation with entire board at first board meeting • Conference call • Phone call to review materials and discuss responsibilities • Either in person or via webinar • Also observe the clinical skills examination used within the certification program early during their tenure • Training in Policy Governance at conference or with coach • Online virtual meeting	19%

Who is responsible for conducting the orientation/training?

Executive Director/CEO	39%
Board President/Chair	27%
Outside consultant/governance specialist	0%
Other (please specify): • Certification Director	34%

- Staff liaison and testing consultant - CEO, Board Chair, Senior Staff Leaders - All of the above: CEO, Board Chair and Outside consultant/governance specialist - The Ed and executive committee conduct orientation - All of the above - Director of Certification - Testing Company AND Executive Director - Staff - Non-voting board member - project/program manager or administrator - Executive Director and Board Chair together - Administrative Director - Finance and possibly others; not sure. - Executive Director and Board Chair conduct the in-person training together. - Executive Director and Board Chair - Membership staff - All of the above - ED and Certification Program Director provide separate training - Executive Director, President and Staff - Formally, it's the Governance Committee, but usually staff provide the orientation. - Staff tasked with that orientation - Certification staff - Parent organization staff to the certification board - Different individuals depending on type of orientation (ED, Chair, coach)	

Does training for the certification board / committee address their fiduciary responsibilities?

Yes	81%
No	19%

Does certification board / committee training address confidentiality and conflicts of interest?

Yes	93%
No	3%
Other	4%

Does certification board / committee training address the certification program(s) and the examination development processes?

Yes	85%
No	11%
Other	4%

In your opinion, does your certification board understand the certification process (from exam development to exam delivery, marketing, etc.)?

Yes	50%
No	11%
Some understanding	40%

Do certification board / committee members receive any additional governance training during their service?

Yes	30%
No	**70%**

If yes, where do certification board / committee members receive this additional governance training?

ICE (Institute of Credentialing Excellence)	19%
Board Source	26%
ASAE (American Society of Association Executive)	7%
CNG (Certification Network Group)	0%
Other (please specify): • Consulting governance experts provide sessions at board meetings • Not official but sometimes members do attend ICE Conferences, we distribute the Board Source booklet to all Board members • There was not the option to select more than one- we use ASAE, Board Source and ICE • SeaCrest consulting • We do Board training with the entire board every year at the one face-to-face meeting. A new board member receives additional orientation prior to that meeting. • ED • None • Policy Governance Consultant • Internally • IPGA and from a governance coach • Legal counsel (aka compliance officer) provides annual training on their responsibilities • Outside consultants	**48%**

Would the organization support sending certification board / committee members to training sessions specifically for certification board members by covering expenses for such events?

Yes	21%
No	17%
Not sure	**61%**

Does the certification board / committee conduct periodic evaluations of the board as a whole or of individual board members?

Yes	40%
No	**60%**

Financial

Are certification board / committee members reimbursed for required travel expenses?

Yes	**84%**
No	16%

Are certification board / committee members reimbursed for other expenses related to their board service (phone, office supplies, etc.)

Yes	22%
No	**78%**

Do certification board / committee members receive compensation (other than expense reimbursement) for their services?

Yes	7%
No	**93%**

Is the certification board responsible for establishing its own budget?

Yes	**55%**
No	20%
The committee has input in the budget development process, but does not have final approval	21%

Other:
   • CEO develops budget which is then agreed to by the Board
   • Yes, but must get permission from parent organization to deficit spend
   • Budget is drafted by the ED for Board review and agreement
	4%

Is the certification board responsible for determining examination, application, renewal and other fees?

Yes	**65%**
No	9%
The certification board/committee has some input in the fee setting process, but not final approval	26%

Certification Program Management

How many employees are responsible for the daily operations of the certification program(s)?

None, volunteer-based.	3%
1	8%
2-4	**54%**
5-10	22%
More than 10	13%

Is the certification board responsible for the selection, hiring, and firing of key certification staff and/or consultants?

Yes	26%
No	**60%**
Other: - Board hires CEO; CEO hires all other staff. Consultant contracts over a specified amount require board approval - Input to CEO of membership association as they act as management company - Board is only responsible for selection, hiring & firing the Executive Director/CEO - Staff is an association management company, we contract with the company, they provide the staff. The Board approves the Executive Director position, all other staff positions are provided as per need. - The certification board has a formal contract with our affiliated membership organization to provide staffing. The board approves that contract but the affiliated organization's CEO is responsible for hiring all staff - Can initiate input, but not full responsibility - Shared responsibility by the Board and parent organization - Certification Board hires Executive Director, Attorney and CPA. Executive Director is responsible for all staff. - No, except for the Executive Director - We are managed by an outside contracted company	13%

Is the certification board responsible for the selection of subject matter experts that serve on examination development committees?

Yes	**57%**
No	39%
Other	4%

Quality Improvement/Policy Review

Are certification policies reviewed and updated regularly?

Yes	**91%**
No	9%

If yes or sometimes, how often are certification policies reviewed and updated?

- **Annually (25)**
- Rotating basis; most are done at least every 3 years
- Application and Certification Maintenance every 3 years.
- Every two years with chair change
- As needed, often annually
- We are too new, only 2 years old, so our policies have not needed to be changed yet
- Every 5 years or sooner if necessary
- All policies have a bi-annual review written into them. Sooner if needed.
- Currently reviewing policy. Expect to conduct annual reviews.
- At a minimum annually, and as needed within the calendar year.
- Currently reviewing policies, expect to review annually.
- When there are changes to the programs or every two years.
- As needed; no less than annually
- Policies are reviewed at least annually and updated as needed
- Any can be revisited/updated when needed. Some are reviewed every 2-3 years.
- Every 6 months
- Ongoing
- At least once every 3 years, or as needed
- Every 2-3 years or as needed
- 2-3 years
- Varies
- No set schedule
- Every 2 years
- As needed. Definitely every 3-5 years
- Reviewed twice a year, after each Board meeting
- Sometimes - typically when an issue arises
- Annually in the sense that our certification policies are updated as needed
- Some are an Annual review, some every 2 years
- Annually or as needed
- As needed
- Every 4 years
- No formal schedule, but updates are ongoing
- Yearly if not more often as needed
- On an ongoing basis. Whenever it is noted that changes are needed, they are made. This happens throughout the year.
- Every 18-24 months

- Probably every year some aspect of the Policies and Procedures Manual is reviewed in depth and updated/clarified
- They are reviewed throughout the year and updated as needed
- At least once/year
- As needed for most policies and annually for policies related for examination qualification and renewal policies
- Annually the board reviews the policies
- Annually and more often as necessary
- Every 2 years

Does the organization send board members periodic activity updates?

Yes	92%
No	8%

If yes, how often are the activity updates sent?

Every month	20%
Every quarter	28%
Only at board meetings	**35%**
Other: • At board meetings and whenever appropriate between meetings • Quarterly updates provided at board meetings; additional ones as needed depending on the activities completed • Under Policy Governance updates are at least annual • At the board meeting and as needed throughout the rest of the year • Every month • Mostly as part of each board meeting. Occasionally there is an update about a specific activity between meetings • Mainly at board meetings; but also on an as needed basis • Most of them are included in board meeting packets, but we also send financial statements every month • At least once a quarter sometimes more frequently • As needed • As required • At board meetings and as needed	17%

Does the organization have written formal policies and procedures in place for the certification program that address essential certification functions like eligibility, recertification, test development, maintenance of records, security, etc?

Yes	92%
No	1%
Some policies	7%

Strategic Development

Is the certification board responsible for marketing activities related to the certification program?

Yes	35%
Yes with support from a parent organization	20%
No	**39%**
Other	5%

Check all terms below that accurately describe the organization's certification board:

Strategic	**65%**
Proactive	63%
Reactive	45%
Detail oriented	37%
Micro managers	8%

What are the most significant challenges currently facing the certification board?

Government (federal or state) recognition	26%
Marketing	29%
Item writing	14%
Ongoing exam maintenance	21%
Increasing employer support of the credential(s)	**43%**
Creating industry support for the certification	36%
Issues related to global/international operations	21%
Competition from other certification/certificate programs (especially programs with lower standards/criteria)	31%
Ethical/disciplinary issues	6%
Managing volunteers	14%
Setting cut scores in the face of a workforce shortage	3%
Managing growth and/or transition management	19%
Broadening mission	8%
Implementing new business model/changing organizational structure	17%
Keeping exams updated	21%
Cost containment	25%
Exam security	13%
ADA accommodations	3%
Attendance and active participation at live meetings	8%
Aging certificant population	22%
English as a second language candidates	10%
Membership	3%
Recruiting qualified board members/leadership succession	32%
Orientation for new board members	11%
Monitoring ongoing compliance with accreditation standards	14%
Transition to CBT	6%

First recertification cycle	3%
Other recertification/continuing competence issues	11%
Defining and promotion value of the certification program	36%
Maximizing technology use	21%
Collaboration with other certification bodies	10%
Developing a practical exam	7%
Unauthorized use of credential	8%
Expanding revenue streams beyond certification revenue	24%
Pressure from parent organization	8%
Budget issues/decrease in revenue	18%
Candidate applications: security and accuracy	6%
Launching a program to a new audience	17%
Re-launching a program	1%

Certification Programs

How many credentials does the organization offer?

1	**41%**
2-5	32%
6-9	13%
10 or more	13%

Approximately how many individuals were certified by the organization in 2012?

Less than 250	**25%**
250 - 500	17%
500 - 1,000	13%
1,000 – 3,000	19%
3,001 – 6,000	9%
More than 6,000	16%

Has the organization launched a new certification program in the last five years?

Yes	48%
No	**52%**

What category best defines the profession represented by the organization's certificants?

Agriculture	0%
Arts/Drama	0%
Business/Finance/Legal/Administrative Services	11%
Construction	1%
Education and Training	3%
Emergency Management/Fire Science	1%
Engineering	0%
Fitness/Nutrition	1%

Foodservice/Culinary	3%
Healthcare/Medical	**60%**
HVAC	0%
Information Technology	1%
Manufacturing	0%
Other	13%
Personal services	0%
Real Estate	1%
Recreation	1%
Research and Development/Technology	0%
Retail/Wholesale	0%
Technical Services	3%
Tourism/Hospitality	0%
Transportation	0%

Which of these statements most accurately describes the organization's credential program(s)?

The credential is voluntary.	**72%**
The credential is required for employment.	11%
The credential is required for licensure.	8%
Other: • APRN credential required for licensure and employment; RN credentials voluntary • The credential is required for licensure in about 1/2 the states only • Certification by some organization will probably be required soon although not one specific certification will be required • Some states are beginning to require it • All are accurate depending on location • Combination of voluntary and required for employment/licensure • All three apply in selected states	10%

Is the certification program currently accredited?

NCCA accredited	32%
ABNS accredited	5%
ANSI accredited	12%
No	**35%**
Currently seeking accreditation	18%
Other: • ISO Certified • URAC accredited • Planning to seek accreditation within the next year • FSAB • CESB • ICAC • URAC • Already CESB-accredited, seeking NCCA accreditation	11%

Does the certification program plan to apply for NCCA, ANSI or ABNS accreditation within the next 5 years?

Yes	54%
No	46%