



# OUR PRINCIPLES IN ACTION >>>



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# ACCOUNTANTS CAN SAVE THE WORLD!

“There was a time when we could say that there was either a complete lack of knowledge, or at least room for doubt, about the consequences for our planet of our actions. That time has gone. We now know all too clearly what we are actually doing and that we need to do something about it urgently. Better accounting must be part of that process.”

**HRH The Prince of Wales**

The role of finance is shifting. More and more businesses are redefining their strategies in order to remain resilient and prosperous against the backdrop of a changing climate, societal pressures and a growing global population.

In order to do this, organizations are looking to their finance teams to have the skills to identify and understand a wider set of information and provide additional insight.

Finance professionals can be some of the most influential advisers within an organization. With the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) predicted to open up US\$12 trillion of market opportunities, those who find ways to use natural resources in a sustainable way, and whose purpose is defined by the contribution they make to society, will find themselves uncovering new sources of innovation, reducing their risks and increasing their competitive advantage.

The Prince of Wales set up his Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S) in 2004, underlining that the accountancy profession plays a central role in ensuring that we have 21st century tools to address 21st century challenges and provide lasting, sustainable prosperity.

The A4S Accounting Bodies Network was launched in 2008 to help make The Prince of Wales's vision for sustainable decision making to be the norm a reality.

# WHAT IS THE ABN?



**2/3**  
**OF THE WORLD'S**  
**ACCOUNTANTS**  
**REPRESENTED**  
**BY THE ABN**

“The Accounting Bodies Network is a great collaborative force that has, for the past ten years, used its combined expert knowledge to support members and students to account for sustainability, providing the competencies and frameworks required to build a sustainable economy within which individuals and organizations can thrive”

**Jessica Fries**  
**Executive Chairman, A4S**

The A4S Accounting Bodies Network (ABN) is a prominent group of accounting bodies from across the globe, brought together to help achieve a common approach to accounting for sustainability.

The members are committed to challenging the conventional fundamentals of accounting and working to provide today's, and tomorrow's, decision makers with the information and skills they need to drive sustainable businesses.

The Network provides an open, cross border platform, where members can share knowledge and collaborate on related matters, ultimately to drive change and influence their collective membership of 2.4 million accountants and accounting students in 181 countries. All ABN members sign up to five core principles which they pledge to enact as part of their membership.

# ABN MEMBERS



# A REFLECTION ON THE PAST 10 YEARS

## ABN activities and achievements have included:

- **Championing** key transformational developments including integrated reporting <IR> and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), enabling members to adapt more holistic and integrated thinking.
- **Advancing** standards and providing technical input on a breadth of sustainability accounting matters.
- **Initiating** multi-stakeholder dialogue on embedding sustainability into professional qualifications, highlighting the need for evolving skills and knowledge.
- **Publishing** an extensive collection of accounting for sustainability research and materials.
- **Developing** thought leadership on integrated thinking and systems.
- **Establishing** specialist multi-stakeholder sustainability groups to provide advice and guidance.
- **Holding** conferences, webinars, podcasts, interviews and producing case studies on accounting for sustainability.

# 2008

THE ABN WAS  
LAUNCHED BY  
THE PRINCE OF WALES  
AT ST. JAMES'S  
PALACE



# 5 ABN PRINCIPLES



**INFLUENCE  
AND INFORM**



**LEAD  
BY EXAMPLE**



**DRIVE THOUGHT  
LEADERSHIP**



**COLLABORATE  
THROUGH THE  
NETWORK**



**INCORPORATE  
ACCOUNTING FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY  
WITHIN TRAINING AND  
PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATION**



“We engage with governments, multilateral bodies and regulators around the world to deepen understanding and progress of sustainability issues and to meaningfully improve how professional accountants can help countries build a more sustainable future.”

**ACCA**

“With integrated reporting spreading rapidly in Japan, we are dedicated to running initiatives, events and publications to continue to influence the adoption of <IR> as standard practice.” **JICPA**

# PRINCIPLE ONE: INFLUENCE AND INFORM

Examples of ABN activities to promote accounting for sustainability and integrated thinking include:

## **CPA Canada**

providing climate adaptation and disclosure training across a number of Canadian industries and throughout all levels of an organization (most recently in partnership with Natural Resources Canada).

## **ICAEW**

raising awareness of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to their members and the need for transformational change to achieve them, using a digital ‘Global Goals’ game and implementation workshops.

## **SAICA**

driving the adoption of integrated reports in South Africa, using its position as a founding member of the Integrated Reporting Committee of South Africa.

Award programmes identify and celebrate good practice case studies, as seen by the [Finance for the Future Awards](#) (co-founded by A4S and **ICAEW**), and **ICAS**’s Sustainability Essay Competition.

# PRINCIPLE TWO: LEAD BY EXAMPLE

ABN members embed accounting for sustainability within their own organizations' strategy and operations, for example:

- Producing their own annual integrated reports;
- Embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of their vision and strategy;
- Signing up to key initiatives progressing standards across the accounting profession such as the UN Global Compact, Women in Finance Charter, Access Accountancy; and
- Establishing internal sustainability teams and external advisory committees to advise the organizations' Board and shape direction.



“Our sphere of influence to advance the Global Compact and its principles extends beyond our membership to the organizations they work for and their clients. We are committed to embedding their principles in our strategy, culture and day to day operations.” **CA ANZ**

“The Association of International Certified Professional Accountants, combining the strengths of the AICPA and CIMA, measures and reports its own performance in an integrated way.”

**The Association of  
International Certified  
Professional Accountants**



View the collection of reports by the ABN members on the [A4S Knowledge Hub](#).



“We consider thought leadership to be a key responsibility to our members, and to the many tens of thousands of clients and employers they service and engage with. We aim to be a bold and knowledgeable voice.” **AAT**

## PRINCIPLE THREE: DRIVE THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Collectively, ABN members have published widely on sustainability and accounting matters, covering topics such as:

- Integrated reporting and thinking;
- Accounting for natural capital;
- Climate change risk disclosure;
- Greenhouse gas emissions management systems;
- Implementing the SDGs;
- Future proofing decision making;
- Corporate reporting and institutional investors.

ABN member led initiatives include:

- **CPA Australia** and **CA ANZ** run the A4S trans-Tasman [Circle of Practice](#) with A4S and the Group of 100.
- **CPA Canada** has partnered with **A4S**, supporting the Canadian Chapter of the A4S [CFO Leadership Network](#).
- **ICAEW** and **CIMA** are founding members of the [Natural Capital Coalition](#) (NCC), a global, multi-stakeholder open source platform for supporting the development of methods for natural and social capital valuation in business.
- **ICAS** and SEPA run the Scottish Sustainable Development Goals Reporting Working Group to help businesses integrate the SDGs into their day to day work.

# PRINCIPLE FOUR: COLLABORATE THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

ABN members regularly participate in working groups, taskforces and sit on advisory councils of global industry bodies.

In addition, the ABN collaborates to harness its collective and global voice. For example:

- A 2018 '[Accounting Bodies Statement of Support](#)', signed by 13 CEOs, affirmed their commitment to support the voluntary recommendations of the industry led Financial Stability Board (FSB) Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures.
- A 2015 '[ABN Open Letter](#)', signed by 12 CEOs, called on world leaders at COP 21 to demonstrate the determination and political will necessary to achieve a low carbon, sustainable future.



“Over the last ten years, our Institute has valued the chance to collaborate through the international network of the Accounting Bodies Network. It allows us to share learning, experiences, and enables collaboration with others in the accountancy profession to advance better accounting for sustainability.” **The Association of International Certified Professional Accountants**



ABN members present the 'Accounting Bodies Statement of Support' for the TCFD recommendations to HRH The Prince of Wales at St. James's Palace. November 2017.



The ABN is identifying gaps in the integration of sustainability in the learning cycle of a finance professional, and exploring how these can be addressed. To find out more, email A4S via [accountingforsustainability@royal.uk](mailto:accountingforsustainability@royal.uk)



The Prince of Wales meets ABN members at St. James's Palace for the A4S Annual Summit in November 2016.

## PRINCIPLE FIVE: INCORPORATE ACCOUNTING FOR SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

To be effective accountants in a world facing unprecedented environmental and social challenges, it is imperative that qualifications embed accounting for sustainability throughout the syllabus and across the life long learning of the professional accountant, in order to develop the right competencies.

In a 2018 survey\* of accountants and trainee accountants:

**93%** believe there are significant commercial benefits from integrating social and environmental factors into decision making.

**12%** strongly agree that sustainability is embedded into the training of accountancy professionals.

**14%** strongly agree they have the necessary organizational support to ensure material environmental and social considerations are included in their decision making.

Closing these gaps is a key focus for the ABN over the coming year.

\*current data at time of publication.

# BEING AN ABN MEMBER

As an established network of The Prince's Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S), members of the Accounting Bodies Network:

- **Share knowledge and insights with different accounting bodies**, and accelerate progress towards a global common approach to accounting for sustainability.
- **Harness the collective and global voice** to send strong and unified messages within the finance and accounting community.
- **Access and help to shape the latest research and projects** run by A4S and its CFO Leadership Network, including A4S's [Essential Guide series](#).
- **Participate in the A4S Summit week**, including the main Forum held at St. James's Palace and hosted by HRH The Prince of Wales.
- **Leverage** the global networks of The Prince's Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S) across the entire finance and accounting community.



Hear from **CPA Canada's** [Gord Beal](#) on what the ABN means to him

**For more information on the Network** [visit our website](#) or contact us at: [\*\*accountingforsustainability@royal.uk\*\*](mailto:accountingforsustainability@royal.uk)

# BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT

As a professional accountant or trainee accountant, you have a critical role to play in creating a sustainable future. Here are a few practical actions you can take:



\* FSB Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures

# ABOUT A4S

The Prince's Accounting for Sustainability Project (A4S) was established by HRH The Prince of Wales in 2004.

Our aim is to make sustainable decision making business as usual.

We work with the finance and accounting community to:

- **Inspire finance leaders** to adopt sustainable and resilient business models;
- **Transform financial decision making** to enable an integrated approach, reflective of the opportunities and risks posed by environmental and social issues;
- **Scale up action** across the global finance and accounting community.

A4S has three global networks: the Accounting Bodies Network whose members comprise approximately two thirds of the world's accountants; the Chief Financial Officers Leadership Network, a group of CFOs from leading organizations seeking to transform finance and accounting; and the Asset Owners Network which brings together pension fund Chairs to explore the integration of sustainability into investment decisions.





Sign up to our newsletter list:  
[www.accountingforsustainability.org/newsletter](http://www.accountingforsustainability.org/newsletter)



@PrincesA4S



The Prince's Accounting for  
Sustainability Project (A4S)



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