



PROJECT REPORT

Natural Resources Sector Continuous Learning Forum: From Strategy to Implementation

Workshop Report with Forum Collaborators



Natural Resources Sector Continuous Learning Forum: From Strategy to Implementation

Workshop Report

Compiled by: Chris Ortner,
Catherine Rockandel, and
Chris Hollstedt

The logo for the Forest Investment Account (FIA) Forest Science Program. It consists of the letters "FIA" in a large, bold, white font on a blue rectangular background. To the right of "FIA", the text "Forest Investment Account" and "Forest Science Program" is written in a smaller white font. A decorative graphic of white squares on a blue background is located to the right of the text.

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ABSTRACT

The Natural Resources Sector Continuous Learning Forum (NRCE Forum) first met as a group in Vancouver on December 6, 2006 to examine the current state of continuing education for natural resource professionals in British Columbia, and to initiate a collaborative strategy to address challenges. The 37 participants represented a cross-section of stakeholders, including practitioners, employers, educators, and government. They identified leadership, the necessity to clearly understand learner needs, effective co-ordination of existing capacity, and the development of a well-reasoned business case as priorities for moving forward. They recommended strategies to improve the situation. Since that time, a leadership team nominated by the group has guided the development of a strategic plan. This plan is a working document guiding implementation activities. Sub-sector meetings have occurred to confirm agreement in principle with the strategy and to further define potential roles and responsibilities. A key message from these meetings is the need to move from strategy to implementation.

On April 15, 2008 at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue in Vancouver, BC, 22 representatives from professional associations, educational institutions, affected government ministries, industry employers, and service providers met to confirm agreement on the strategy and define options for implementation.

As a result of this workshop, the NRCE Forum developed clear direction on the preferred governance model and indications of divergence in the choices available for implementation options. A new leadership team has been selected to guide the work of the NRCE Forum over the next year.

Citation—

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1 BACKGROUND¹

In December 2006, a group of individuals representing natural resource sector employers, regulators, professional associations, and educators met to define the scope of the problem around continuing education and continuing competency for resource practitioners. They agreed that there are divergent trends in the supply and demand of high-quality formal continuing education and non-formal learning opportunities² for natural resource practitioners in British Columbia. The developing gap presents potential economic, productivity, and resource-stewardship risks, and constraints to the province's ability to maintain world-leading natural resource management practices.

While the breadth of the issue emerges with recruitment to appropriate technical and undergraduate programs, and follows a practitioner throughout their career, the primary focus of the solution will be directed toward post-graduate professional development through both formal and non-formal means. It would include maintaining competency in an area of practice as well as providing access to learning opportunities in emerging competency areas. By providing accessible, affordable opportunities for practitioners to upgrade their skills, better understand the interactions of allied sciences, and be more effective at integrating practices that meet social, economic, and environmental needs, we can expect greater productivity, innovation, and effectiveness in the management of natural resources.

The group nominated a leadership team to guide the development of strategic plan and implementation opportunities. A strategy was developed in 2007 to address this problem. The strategy described a series of measures that will identify and lead to collaborative solutions, including the formation of the Natural Resource Sector Continuous Learning Forum (NRCE Forum). After a year of discussions regarding the NRCE Forum strategy, the collaborators met to focus on implementation options.

Two distinct governance options were considered:

1. A collaborative forum formalized via a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and implemented via cooperative agreements, administered by a non-profit partner with a mandate for partnerships and continuous learning with delegated decision authority as guided by the leadership team representing the collaborating parties.
2. A constituted organization under the Societies Act with direct legal decision authority representing a Society of members.

Options for infrastructure, program development, capacity, and funding mechanisms were presented, some that are mutually exclusive from governance.

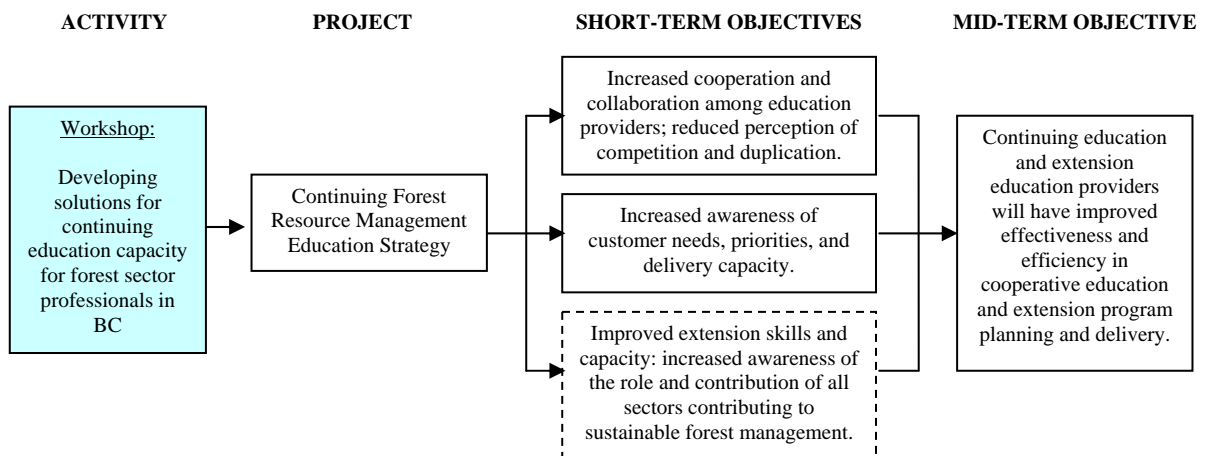
1 Adapted from Hollstedt, C. 2008. Natural Resource Sector Continuous Learning Forum Implementation Plan Options Paper for Discussion.

2 Continuous learning opportunities preferred by practitioners covering a spectrum from formal accredited courses to less-formal high-quality learning opportunities using innovative, cost-effective, and timely approaches. Please see strategic plan for more details.

1.1 The Strategy to Implementation Workshop

The purpose of the overall project is to develop a collaborative, achievable strategy for a continuing forest resource education system in British Columbia. The intended outcome is an enduring systems-based approach to continuing forest resource education supported by adequate infrastructure and capacity to meet current and emerging needs—*proactive, readily accessible, with appropriate content.*

The project contributes to achievement of the objectives set out in the Provincial Forest Extension Program Strategic Plan:³



Project management and governance is provided by FORREX with guidance and advice from the Leadership Team, consisting of the following members in 2007-08:

Ralph Archibald, B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range
 Reid Carter RPF, Timberlands Asset Management
 Al Gorley RPF (Secretary), Triangle Resources Incorporated
 Chris Hollstedt RPF, FORREX Forest Research Extension Partnership
 Linda Kavianto, B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education
 John Mann, FPInnovations/FORREX
 Linda Michaluk RPBio, Association of Professional Biologists of B.C.
 Ian Miller RPF, B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range
 Brian Robinson RPF, Association of B.C. Forest Professionals
 Don Rugg PAg, B.C. Institute of Agrologists
 Linda Stordeur RPBio, College of Applied Biology
 Dave Wilford RPF, PGeo, Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of B.C./Department of Engineers and Geoscientists in Forestry

³ British Columbia Provincial Forest Extension Program Strategic Plan 2005-2010 (June 2006)

2 WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES AND FORMAT

2.1 Workshop Objectives

The primary purpose of the workshop was to confirm a formal agreement on the NRCE Forum Strategy, and to define preferences for implementation options.

The specific workshop outputs were:

1. Endorsement of the Strategy;
2. Presentation of a draft implementation plan, with options;
3. Incorporation of direction on the following options:
 - Governance,
 - Infrastructure,
 - Communications and information management,
 - Program development, implementation, and evaluation,
 - Capacity needs,
 - Funding mechanisms; and
4. Consideration of next steps.

Based on participant feedback, and written evaluations, substantial progress was achieved towards these objectives.

2.2 Workshop Format

The workshop was held in the Asia Pacific Hall at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue. The Hall is designed to promote dialogue with its seating in the round, allowing participants to engage in focused conversation among equals. The room features a magnificently restored coffered ceiling and high heritage windows. Ergonomic seating is arranged in concentric rings for maximum interactivity. Each delegate desk is equipped with a microphone and voting technology. In the wings, round tables are set up to allow participants to enjoy lunch and engage in further conversation. The morning and afternoon refreshments breaks were held in the brightly lit atrium.

Chris Hollstedt, CEO of FORREX, welcomed participants and provided an overview of the context for the day. The Wosk Centre's technician provided an overview of the technology and logistics.

At the beginning of the workshop, facilitator Catherine Rockandel provided an overview of the agenda, the facilitative process, and the decision-making rules. These included:

- Any participant could call for closure on an issues discussion;
- The person in charge (Chris Hollstedt) would decide whether to close discussion;
- The options under discussion would be clarified, any amendments captured in the minutes, and Chris Ortner would read the amendments back to the group to ensure they were correct.

- After the first poll for preferences, the results would determine the depth of discussion needed. The agenda specified the maximum amount of time for each section, and the discussion proceeded until time expired, unless closure was called;
- The vote on each section occurred at the end of the implementation discussion; and
- If 80% support was not reached in the second vote, then the issue/option was advanced to the leadership team for further review. The leadership team would examine the workshop discussion notes and recommend further actions.

The facilitator also reviewed the “gradients of agreement scale” posted on a flip chart to help participants understand the voting process. Rockandel explained that the Wosk Centre voting system works in combination with a PowerPoint slide show that projects one question and possible answers (gradients of agreement scale) on each slide. The Wosk Centre’s technician simply toggles back and forth between the questions and possible responses, and the appropriate polling/voting templates. The responses were either multiple choices or yes or no answers. The multiple choice responses were displayed as: Preference A: 5 (responses); Preference B: 6; Preference C: 2; Preference D: 1; Preference E: 0; along with a bar graph.

The facilitator explained that the results from the initial poll were not a vote or a decision, but a record of the group’s preferences. In this way participants could accurately and authentically convey the extent of their support (or non-support) for a particular option by choosing the gradient that best reflected their perspective. The results of the poll provided the basis for further discussion on the two options being proposed.

For several sections, the responses were spread between options one and two, with only a slightly higher number of responses favouring one option over the other. In these instances, clear support for one option over the other was more ambiguous. The discussion became pivotal for understanding why some participants preferred one option. For example, in one section, participants indicated a preference for option two, and did so because, while they recognized that option one was likely the place to start, option two was where they believed the NRCE Forum ultimately needed to go. This understanding would not have been captured through yes or no language. The richness of the discussion was captured in the minutes and helped inform the leadership team’s review of the process.

The method for polling the group involved the following process:

- An overview of the options under discussion was provided by Chris Hollstedt;
- The facilitator called for questions of clarity to ensure that everyone understood the options;
- A PowerPoint slide outlined the poll question and the “gradients of agreement scale”;
- The facilitator called the question and asked participants to “please vote”;
- The voting system buttons flashed red for 20 seconds, allowing participants time to make their choice;
- The facilitator asked the Wosk Centre technician to display the results. The results were displayed on two overhead screens. As well, the facilitator wrote the results on a flip chart in case the group wanted to review previous votes. The results were

handwritten on flip charts because the voting technology cannot go backwards while conducting a vote, which means that previous votes cannot be reviewed;

- Once the initial poll was complete, the facilitator led a discussion to review the results, different perspectives, and interests;
- Once discussion had explored the issues for each section, a vote was conducted to determine the best option for making the NRCE Forum work;
- In the case where a clear choice between options was not made, the group invoked the decision-making rule agreed to at the onset. For options with less than 80% support after the second vote, the issue was referred to the leadership team for further discussion.

3 NRCE FORUM UPDATE

3.1 NRCE Forum Progress Report and Strategic Plan

A presentation was given by Brian Robinson RPF, President of the Association of BC Forest Professionals, and Al Gorley RPF of Triangle Resources, to provide a history of NRCE Forum activities. The presentation provided a foundation for receiving input on the working draft of the strategy.

A review was given of the legal framework, with a note that Provincial forest practices legislation focuses on professional reliance versus a rule-based approach. Regulated professions require members to practice only in areas in which they are competent, and this is determined through self-assessment. Natural resource sector practitioners require access to high-quality continuing education products and services to maintain their competency. However, there is no current system for development and/or delivery of continuing education for natural resource practitioners.

This gap was recognized, and funding secured through the Forest Investment Account (Forest Science Board) to determine a collaborative response. A workshop was held in December 2006, where participants defined the scope of the problem and asked that a strategy be developed to address the issues. A leadership team was nominated, and a project supervisor put in place.

The December 2006 workshop derived a statement of scope for the initiative in two ways.⁴

In its initial stages, the initiative will focus on:

1. *a target audience that consists of professionals, technologists, and technicians engaged in natural resource management who are members of a professional/technical registering body; and*

⁴ Gorley, A. and C. Gorley. 2007. Developing Solutions for Continuing Education Capacity for Forest Sector Professionals in British Columbia. FORREX Project Report. <http://www.forrex.org/publications/other/FileReports/CEWorkshop2006.pdf>

2. *high-priority education that addresses knowledge or skills identified as necessary to meet the competency and upgrading requirements of the target audience, and is recognized by the appropriate professional/technical registering body.*

The agreed-upon philosophy for advancement incorporated the following elements:

- Transparent and measurable standards;
- Fair competition amongst providers;
- Cost-effective, timely, and equitable access;
- Information about emerging needs;
- Utilization of existing capacity;
- Adaptability; and
- Shared responsibility.

The collective goal is “to ensure that natural resource practitioners throughout British Columbia will have access to a highly effective system of continuing education that provides timely, relevant, and affordable quality learning opportunities.”

Over the next 15 months, the leadership team developed terms of reference, and met more than eight times to comment on strategic plan drafts, provide direction on product development, and guide the drafting of the implementation plan options paper. Updates were produced for the broader audience. The projects were included in the Provincial Forest Extension Program annual business plan, and funds were secured for further scoping and development of solutions. These included:

- Maintaining the <http://nrceforum.forrex.org> website;
- Developing and maintaining an online searchable source of continuous learning products and services (currently limited to 2007 courses but will be updated and include non-formal opportunities);
- Hiring a Continuing Education Advisor (through the B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range); and
- Securing input through presentations to key employer groups, professional associations, the leadership table, and continuing education providers.

The key elements of the strategic plan included a collaborative forum to improve dialogue between stakeholders, and a common portal to enable efficient access to information needed by stakeholders. Strategic objectives include the need for:

- Sound, accessible information about current and emerging needs and priorities;
- Access to information and advocacy for relevant, credible, and affordable quality learning opportunities; and
- An efficient framework for collaboration between primary stakeholders.

One of the objectives of the April 15, 2008 workshop was the endorsement of the strategic plan, followed by a dialogue on implementation options and confirmation of the leadership team.

The task of drafting the final implementation solution, and preparing multi-agency MOUs and funding mechanisms will be referred to the leadership team.

4 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Each option was prefaced by an introduction from Chris Hollstedt, followed by discussion and polling. Options and preference polls were originally intended to be followed immediately by a vote to make a final determination. After discussion among the group, it was felt that voting would best be done after a complete overview of all areas and financial implications was presented. Therefore, these votes were taken at the end of the process, but are presented here in their original categories to provide for a logical flow.

4.1 Strategic Plan

The collective goal of the strategic plan is to ensure that natural resource practitioners throughout British Columbia will have access to a highly effective system of continuing education that provides timely, relevant, and affordable quality learning opportunities.

Objectives:

- Sound, accessible information about current and emerging needs and priorities;
- Access to information and advocacy for relevant, credible, and affordable quality learning opportunities; and
- An efficient framework for collaboration between primary stakeholders.

Strategic Plan Poll

Question 1: What do you think of the strategic plan?

A. Yes, I really like it!	11
B. I like it - It is good enough	8
C. I don't like it, but go for it	0
D. I prefer something different	0

Strategic Plan Vote

Question 2: Do you endorse the strategic plan as discussed?

Yes 19
No 0

4.2 Governance Options⁵

Option 1: Voluntary collaborative organization administered by a non-profit organization with a mandate for continuous learning. This option suggests that the NRCE Forum is a voluntary collaboration of individuals representing organizations contributing to the goals and objectives of the NRCE Forum. This option leverages existing infrastructure and provides mechanisms to establish the foundation for the NRCE Forum, focusing on implementing results rather than administering processes.

Collaborating **organizations** demonstrate commitment to the NRCE Forum via a signed MOU. The MOU describes the terms and conditions of collaboration with the NRCE Forum. The term of the MOU is five years. The legal construct overseeing the NRCE Forum is FORREX, a British Columbia-based charitable non-profit Society. FORREX will administer the NRCE Forum on behalf of the collaborators as a distinct department within its legal structure.

NRCE Forum **representatives** are nominated by their organizations and participate by:

- Attending the annual NRCE Forum event;
- Contributing ideas to strategic goals and objectives;
- Keeping the NRCE Forum informed in-year of related activities that may be of interest to the NRCE Forum, and contributing to the goals and objectives as defined in the strategic plan via submissions to the NRCE Forum email list service;
- Providing annual updates on activities and deliverables that contribute to the NRCE Forum;
- Electing a leadership team from the representatives.

The **Leadership Team** is elected from the representatives and provides guidance to the Secretary and Administrator on NRCE Forum activities. They do this by meeting on a quarterly basis and chairing the annual NRCE Forum event.

The Secretary provides assistance to the leadership team, scheduling and facilitating meetings, recording minutes, and communicating with the leadership team and NRCE Forum representatives on in-year progress.

The **Administrator** oversees the NRCE Forum budget on any project activities included in the annual plan.

Option 2: Non-profit or cooperative entity. This option proposed that the NRCE Forum become a formal not-for-profit corporation registered under the *Society Act*. Collaborating **organizations** demonstrate commitment to the NRCE Forum via a signed Membership Agreement (MA). The MA describes the terms and conditions of collaboration with the

⁵ Hollstedt, C. 2008. Natural Resource Sector Continuous Learning Forum Implementation Plan Options Paper for Discussion.

NRCE Forum. The membership term is five years, renewable upon submission of a membership renewal agreement.

Members participate in annual activities of the Society. They elect a Board of Directors from the membership at an annual general meeting. The Board of Directors oversees strategic and policy direction of the Society. The Society may or may not have staff to implement operations. In the event that there is no staff, Directors assume operational roles, including, but not limited to secretary, strategic and operational planning, finance, and administration.

Governance Option Poll

Question 3: Assuming funding is not an issue, do you prefer option one or two?

A. I prefer option one	15
B. I prefer option one with changes	1
C. I prefer option two	3
D. I prefer option two with changes	0
E. I have an alternative option	0

Discussion on the governance options related primarily to funding and administrative efficiency.

Both options have financial issues, but the speed of implementation is faster with Option 1, which would demonstrate decisiveness in our approach. It may be possible to move from one option to another over time, if desired by the leadership team. This would satisfy some of the proponents of Option 2. The evolution of the MOU between organizations would become an opportunity to work out differences in approach.

Governance Options Vote

Question 4: Assuming funding is not an issue, which is the best option for making this work?

A. I think option one is the best choice	18
B. I think option one with changes is best	0
C. I think option two is the best choice	2
D. I think option two with changes is best	0
E. I don't like either option	0

The vote was carried at a level of 90%.

4.3 Infrastructure

The **Secretary** provides meeting and communications support to the leadership team. Secretary services are provided to the NRCE Forum via a professional services contract administered by FORREX.⁶

The BC Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) funds a staff person who allocates 70% of their time as a **Continuing Education Advisor** for the NRCE Forum. The Continuing Education Advisor oversees all projects initiated by the NRCE Forum. This person supports the development of collaborative approaches and frameworks, initiates projects to develop and update training and delivery models, undertakes stakeholder consultations, develops a comprehensive communications plan, and provides advice as the ministry's training resource contact. This person also gathers, collates, and ranks information related to the training needs of resource professionals annually.

Infrastructure Poll

Question 5: Do you like the staffing proposal?

A. Yes, I really like it	7
B. I like it, but it needs work	12
C. I prefer something different	1
D. I just don't like it	0

The staffing poll was presented as a concept only, with no options. The Secretary is minimal part-time, and with most of the formative work completed, the main duties will be to provide services to the leadership team and coordinate the annual forum. The actual amount of work depends on how much the MFR coordinator takes on, and the level of participation of Forum participants. A full-time coordinator may be required at some point, and has been anticipated in previous proposals. There will be an opportunity to evolve, beginning modestly and focusing on needs. The MFR position is funded for five years.

Infrastructure Vote

Question 6: Do you agree with the staffing proposal?

A. Yes, I agree it is the way to go!	17
B. Yes, with suggested changes	2
C. I don't like it, but don't let me hold it up	1
D. No, I don't agree with it	0

The staffing vote showed 95% acceptance after discussion.

⁶ Hollstedt, C. 2008. Natural Resource Sector Continuous Learning Forum Implementation Plan Options Paper for Discussion.

4.4 Communication and Information Management

Option 1: FORREX provides and manages a website (<http://nrceforum.forrex.org>) and lists services on behalf of the NRCE Forum. All documents and related material are made available and archived by FORREX on behalf of the NRCE Forum. They maintain a project management Intranet site for use by the Secretary and leadership team. Services are provided at cost to the NRCE Forum.

Option 2: The NRCE Forum contracts and/or administers a website and project manager.

Communication and Information Management Poll

Question 7: Do you prefer option one or two?

A. I prefer option one	18
B. I prefer option one with changes	0
C. I prefer option two	0
D. I prefer option two with changes	0
E. I have an alternative option	0

Discussion highlighted the ongoing cost of server and website maintenance. Increased budget will increase robustness. Other infrastructure products may improve document management and supply Web 2.0 to improve internet collaboration. The NRCE Forum could contract someone else to deliver this component. Much support was shown during discussion to keep what we have now, no matter which governance option we adopt. Assurances of a stable platform are key.

Communication and Information Management Vote

Question 8: What is the best option for making this work?

A. I think option one is the best choice	19
B. I think option one with changes is best	1
C. I think option two is the best choice	0
D. I think option two with changes is best	0
E. I don't like either option	0

The vote to choose Option 1 passed by consensus, if proposed changes are incorporated.

4.5 Program Evolution

The NRCE Forum strategic goals and objectives can be achieved over time through a cooperatively defined and implemented work program. Work can be developed and implemented on a volunteer basis (no funding support provided), cooperatively (with some funding support coming from the NRCE Forum), or directly via projects funded by the NRCE Forum. We propose that a combination of these strategies will be most effective at achieving the NRCE Forum goals.

4.6 Program Development

Program development can be costly, and often risky. Economic risks can be mitigated by a well-conducted and documented needs assessment and market analysis. In addition, seed funding can be provided to reduce a certain amount of risk to the developer. This model assumes that the continuing education (CE) sector will carry out the development.

Option 1: The NRCE Forum funds a provincial needs assessment and market analysis at least once every five years. This includes a gap analysis (market needs against available resources). The NRCE Forum does not fund any development costs and relies on service providers and competition (supply and demand) to provide the products and services to the natural resource community. The NRCE Forum maintains an online catalogue of available CE) products and services, updated annually.

Option 2: The NRCE Forum funds a provincial needs assessment and market analysis at least once every five years. This includes a gap analysis (market needs against available resources). The NRCE Forum provides up to half of the development funds to be used by the CE provider sector in product development. The NRCE Forum maintains an online catalogue of available CE products and services, updated annually.

Program Development Poll

Question 9: Do you prefer option one or two?

A. I prefer option one	10
B. I prefer option one with changes	4
C. I prefer option two	4
D. I prefer option two with changes	2
E. I have an alternative option	0

Chris Hollstedt categorized Option 1 as being similar to what we have, with increased capacity to provide a periodic needs assessment, an annual meeting, and a well-maintained information portal. Information would be available to employers, regulators, and service providers to target their course development. Option 2 would provide funding to leverage existing capacity, and to ensure resources (and hence motivation) are there for product development.

Option 2 will have expenditures, but could also anticipate a revenue stream, with the assumption that project partners are willing collaborators. It is also assumed that collaborators would contribute in-kind staff resources and potentially on-going funds from their organizations where possible, especially for short-term needs. Longer-range and future development training will be possible.

Covering costs for collecting and managing pooled money, for overhead, and for project allocations could be difficult when the NRCE Forum is getting started.

Concerns were expressed about the costs for annual updates to the online catalogue. Because weekly updates may be necessary, it was requested that Option 1 include funding for more frequent updates.

Questions indicated that the budget outlined for Option 2 needed clarification (\$500,000 in-kind for development). It is clear that where no leveraging occurs, the choice of product development is up to the individual parties, but where leveraging occurs, the product will focus on the needs of the NRCE Forum, as defined through comprehensive needs assessments, gap analysis, and a directed call for product. The call for product will be directed, to ensure quality and leveraging from partners.

Participants suggested that Option 1 could evolve to Option 2, given partner and institutional support. Option 1 would meet short-term needs, allow individual institutions to develop courses at their risk, and support client access to existing courses from national and international sources. Some participants insisted that Option 2 was necessary, as institutions are at the point of failure now, and need leveraged funding to minimize risk. Other participants recommended proceeding with Option 1, with an opportunity for institutions to put dollars forward for collaboration, and at percentages other than 50%. New wording could include Option 2, with the wording, “The NRCE Forum could provide development funds. . .”

Program Development Vote

Question 10: What is the best option for making this work?

- | | |
|--|---|
| A. I think option one is the best choice | 9 |
| B. I think option one with changes is best | 3 |
| C. I think option two is the best choice | 3 |
| D. I think option two with changes is best | 6 |
| E. I don't like either option | 0 |

No clear decision was evident by the vote. Some participants suggested that they chose Option B, accommodating changes to the Forum catalogue more frequently. Others chose Option D because the NRCE Forum provides up to 50% of cost, and frequent updates. It was decided that the leadership council will review this issue and determine next steps.

4.7 Program Implementation

Option 1: Strategic and annual guidance, and information management. The NRCE Forum is designed to provide strategic direction and evaluate and report on progress made by collaborating parties. The NRCE Forum will produce a strategic plan, gap analysis, annual plan, and progress report, and will maintain an information portal. All other continuous learning products required to achieve the program objectives will be developed and delivered by collaborating parties in the continuing education community for natural resource practitioners. The parties will report on progress annually.

Option 2: Strategic and annual guidance, information management, and cost/revenue sharing. As per Option 2 in program development (Section 4.6), in the event that the NRCE Forum contributed funds to support product development, it may wish to share costs and associated revenue relating to product delivery. Funds retained by the NRCE Forum would be used to support operating and/or future program development costs.

Program Implementation Poll

Question 11: Do you prefer option one or two?

A. I prefer option one	12
B. I prefer option one with changes	2
C. I prefer option two	6
D. I prefer option two with changes	1
E. I have an alternative option	0

The program implementation poll is related to previous discussion on program development options, in that funding is proposed to mitigate risk. Course development costs will be covered, while participant fees are minimal. For Option 1, the parties will provide the course delivery internally.

Discussion indicated a preference to begin with Option 1, moving to Option 2 in the future.

Program Implementation Vote

Question 12: What is the best option for making this work?

A. I think option one is the best choice	11
B. I think option one with changes is best	0
C. I think option two is the best choice	7
D. I think option two with changes is best	2
E. I don't like either option	0

Support was split between option one and two. This issue was forwarded to the leadership team for review.

4.8 Program Evaluation

Effective evaluation is a key component of strategic and operational planning. The NRCE Forum will develop an evaluation plan, including the selection and monitoring of key performance criteria and related indicators.

Option 1: A formative evaluation will be conducted in Year 1, followed by a Year 3 and Year 5 evaluation. NRCE Forum collaborators will participate by reporting on their progress (activities and outputs) against these plans.

Option 2: A formative evaluation will be conducted in Year 1, followed by a first-term evaluation in Year 5. NRCE Forum collaborators will participate by reporting on their progress (activities and outputs) against these plans.

Program Evaluation Poll

Question 13: Do you prefer option one or two?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| A. I prefer option one | 20 |
| B. I prefer option one with changes | 0 |
| C. I prefer option two | 1 |
| D. I prefer option two with changes | 0 |
| E. I have an alternative option | 0 |

Discussion occurred around strategic planning and performance objectives in Year 3. Option 2 would skip this mid-term evaluation, and because the work environment changes quickly, the NRCE Forum may want to evaluate more often. This may also be required by funding agencies. There is also potential for mid-term focus groups, or less intensive mid-term assessment.

Program Evaluation Vote

Question 14: What is the best option for making this work?

- | | |
|--|--|
| A. I think option one is the best choice | 19 |
| B. I think option one with changes is best | 1 (less intensive mid-term assessment) |
| C. I think option two is the best choice | 0 |
| D. I think option two with changes is best | 0 |
| E. I don't like either option | 0 |

It was decided to proceed with a three-part evaluation sequence.

5 FORUM CAPACITY NEEDS

5.1 Funding of Governance

Two options were presented for consideration in funding of governance, as follows:

Option 1

Capacity Area	In-kind	Cash	Total
Leadership team	\$ 32,000		\$ 32,000
Secretary		\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Meetings	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000
Information management	\$ 4,800	\$ 4,800	\$ 9,600
Legal/accounting	\$ 5,000		\$ 5,000
Subtotal	\$ 46,800	\$ 29,800	\$ 76,600

Option 2

Capacity Area	In-kind	Cash	Total
Leadership team	\$ 32,000		\$ 32,000
Executive director		\$ 85,000	\$ 85,000
Secretary (EC)			-
Meetings (including annual Forum)	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000
Information management	\$ 4,800	\$ 4,800	\$ 9,600
Legal/accounting		\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Subtotal	\$ 41,800	\$ 99,800	\$ 141,600

Funding of Governance Poll

Question 15: Do you prefer option one or two?

A. I prefer option one	15
B. I prefer option one with changes	4
C. I prefer option two	2
D. I prefer option two with changes	0
E. I have an alternative option	0

It was noted that both options have leadership team volunteer time included, but Option 2 would not include the current executive director in-kind contribution from FORREX. There would be additional costs involved in establishing a new organization. Quality education requires governance and delivery components to be brought together. Current governance through associations still leaves gaps in education outcomes.

The NRCE Forum approach would provide a system for focused funding, advertising, and informing of employers regarding professionals' needs for continuing education.

Collaboration between organizations and institutions will improve, and funding agencies will likely appreciate the improved efficiencies.

Funding of Governance Vote

Question 16: What is the best option for making this work?

- | | |
|--|----|
| A. I think option one is the best choice | 14 |
| B. I think option one with changes is best | 2 |
| C. I think option two is the best choice | 3 |
| D. I think option two with changes is best | 0 |
| E. I don't like either option | 0 |

After further discussion, some divergence remained with regard to preferred structure, but the required 80% was reached to allow substantial agreement to be declared.

5.2 Funding of Infrastructure

5.2.1 Staffing of Governance Options

The **Secretary** provides meeting and communications support to the leadership team. Secretary services are provided to the NRCE Forum via a professional services contract administered by FORREX.

The B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range (MFR) funds a staff person who allocates 70% of their time as a Continuing Education Advisor for the NRCE Forum. The Continuing Education Advisor oversees all projects initiated by the NRCE Forum. This person supports the development of collaborative approaches and frameworks, initiates projects to develop and update training and delivery models, undertakes stakeholder consultations, develops a comprehensive communications plan, and provides advice as the ministry's training resource contact. This person also gathers, collates, and ranks information related to the training needs of resource professionals annually.

The Secretariat duties are minimal part-time. With most of the formative work complete, and the foundations established, the main duties are coordination for the leadership team and the annual forum. The \$20,000 per year allocated for contractor wages is dependent on the workload adopted by the MFR Continuing Education Advisor. Quarter-time would be a minimum, and this position may evolve to full-time. It was noted that Ralph Archibald's original offer for staffing was \$250,000 per year, but the group agreed to begin with \$100,000 and request additional funds in the future if needs arose.

6 FUNDING OPTIONS

Funding for the problem analysis and foundation for the NRCE Forum has been provided by the Forest Investment Account–Forest Science Program via the Provincial Forest Extension Program⁷. This program also provided partial funding for educational product development and information management. Future funding to support the governance and NRCE Forum will come from the ministries responsible for continuing education and natural resource regulation and stewardship. The B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education will establish a \$500,000 annual vote to be used to support continuing education product development. The B.C. Ministries of Forests and Range, Environment, Agriculture and Lands, Energy Mines and Petroleum Resources, and Economic Development will each contribute \$100,000 annually to support NRCE Forum governance and programs. Professional associations will contribute \$10 per member in cash and/or in-kind services to support the NRCE Forum. Delivery costs will be borne by individuals benefiting from the products and services provided by collaborating service providers.

One scenario was created to demonstrate approximate infrastructure costs.

Infrastructure

Capacity Area	In-kind	Cash	Total
Staff	\$ 100,000		\$ 100,000
Public website	\$ 4,800		\$ 4,800
Members' website		\$ 4,800	\$ 4,800
List Server	\$ 4,800		\$ 4,800
Project management site ⁸	\$ 5,400		\$ 5,400
Project management ⁹		\$ 9,600	\$ 9,600
Financial administration		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Subtotal	\$ 115,000	\$ 24,400	\$ 139,400

6.1 Administrative Services Funding

Option 1: FORREX will provide financial administrative services for the secretariat and cooperatively funded projects on behalf of the NRCE Forum. Quarterly and annual financial statements will be provided to the leadership team. A 10% administrative fee will be charged against all revenue managed on behalf of the NRCE Forum to cover financial administration costs.

Option 2: The NRCE Forum contracts or hires a financial administrator.

⁷ See Hollstedt, C. 2006. Provincial Forest Extension Program Strategic Plan 2005-2010. Executive Summary. <http://www.cortex.bc.ca/fia-fsp/d-comm-ex-EPACst-25Sep06.pdf>

⁸ 10 licenses @ \$45 per month for 12 months.

⁹ Estimates \$100,000 in annual revenue.

Administrative Services Funding Vote

Question 17: What is the best option for making this work?

- A. I think option one is the best choice 17
- B. I think option one with changes is best 1
- C. I think option two is the best choice 2
- D. I think option two with changes is best 0
- E. I don't like either option 0

The use of FORREX to provide financial administrative services was supported by 90% of voters.

6.2 Program Funding

Option 1: Proposes seed funding to be used as leveraging for continuous learning (formal or non-formal) project development.

Option 1 – Seed Funding

Capacity Area	In-kind	Cash	Total
Needs assessment/gap analysis	See staff		
Online catalogue maintenance		\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Curriculum development ¹⁰	\$ 500,000	\$ 485,000	\$ 985,000
Evaluation and progress report		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Subtotal	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 1,000,000

Option 2: Provides no seed funding and relies on the provider community to find resources for continuous learning project development.

Option 2 – No Seed Funding

Capacity Area	In-kind	Cash	Total
Needs assessment/gap analysis	See staff		
Online catalogue maintenance		\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Curriculum development	\$ 500,000		\$ 500,000
Evaluation and progress report		\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Subtotal	\$ 500,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 515,000

¹⁰ Leveraged funds from collaborative projects.

Program Funding Poll

Question 18: Do you prefer option one or two?

A. I prefer option one	8
B. I prefer option one with changes	1
C. I prefer option two	10
D. I prefer option two with changes	0
E. I have an alternative option	0

Discussion arose around continuing education service providers investing \$500,000 of in-kind contributions toward the NRCE Forum, and whether this is a reasonable expectation. If their priorities align, it may be possible to leverage this level of funding, and the leveraged funding was recognized as good motivation to help direct efforts, especially if priorities are brought forward through a cooperative needs analysis.

Advocacy approaches to contributing agencies were discussed, as was the potential for student contributions on a fee or registration basis. Other potential funding sources were explored, including federal government (climate change or other initiatives). It was recognized that professional associations would need to consult further with members before sourcing funds.

Program Funding Vote

Question 19: What is the best option for making this work?

A. I think option one is the best choice	10
B. I think option one with changes is best	1
C. I think option two is the best choice	8
D. I think option two with changes is best	0
E. I don't like either option	0

Chris Hollstedt provided an overview of two options. With seed funding, the NRCE Forum could provide dialogue, update the catalogue, and undertake curriculum development. With option two (no seed funding), the online catalogue would be included, but no additional funds would be available for risk management.

Discussion focused on whether funding levels were appropriate. The estimates provided were based on canvassing for yearly amounts. The transfer of funds requires the establishment of a legal entity, but not necessarily new monies. The program funding would include programs that are less formal and not necessarily accredited.

Funding Mechanism Poll

Question 20: What do you think of the funding mechanism?

- | | |
|---|----|
| A. Yes, I agree it is the way to go! | 3 |
| B. Yes, with suggested changes | 12 |
| C. I don't like it, but don't let me hold it up | 2 |
| D. No, I don't agree with it | 1 |

Funding Mechanism Vote

Question 21: Do you agree with the funding mechanism?

- | | |
|---|----|
| A. Yes, I agree it is the way to go! | 10 |
| B. Yes, with suggested changes | 1 |
| C. I don't like it, but don't let me hold it up | 8 |
| D. No, I don't agree with it | 0 |

Participants noted that the majority of the funding is in-kind, with development funding from the ministries, and fees from students for delivery costs. The B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Highways needs to be included.

7 LEADERSHIP TEAM

Leadership team members were sought for engagement at both the leadership and sub-sector levels. The strategic plan calls for six to eight members, who demonstrate a cross-section of agencies and interests. Current members are Suzanne Christensen, Rod Davis, Chris Hollstedt, Linda Kaivanto, Bruce Larson, John Mann, Linda Michaluk, Ian Miller, Judith Murray, Brian Robinson, Don Rugg, Linda Stodeur, Dave Wilford, and Al Gorley (Secretary).

Nominations were sought from the floor, with results as follows:

Nominated Person	Agency	Comment
Deesh Olychick	AGEGBC	Accepted
Al Gorley	Service Provider	Accepted
Bruce Larson	UBC	Accepted
Brian Robinson	ABCFP	Accepted
Hugh Carter	CFBC Representative	Not present
Ian Miller	MFR	Accepted
Gary Merkle	Aboriginal Representative	Not present
Linda Kaivanto	Min Advanced Education	Not present
Jerry Fox	Oil and Gas Commission	Not present
Peter Barss	BCIT	Accepted

Other potential nominees include First Nation representatives Dave Nordquist, Jim McGrath, Nathan Matthew, or Nancy Wilson.

The next meeting of the (current) leadership team will appoint new members, and assign individuals to approach potential members.

8 SUMMARY

The following table summarizes findings by vote area:

Vote	Description	A	B	C	D	E	Comment
1	Strategic plan poll	11	8	0	0		
2	Strategic plan vote	19	0				Carried
3	Governance poll	15	1	3	0	0	
4	Governance vote	18	0	2	0	0	Carried
5	Staffing poll	7	12	1	0		
6	Staffing vote	17	2	1	0		Carried
7	Communications poll	18	0	0	0	0	
8	Communications vote	19	1	0	0	0	Carried
9	Program development options poll	10	4	4	2	0	
10	Program development options vote	9	3	3	6	0	More discussion needed
11	Program implementation poll	12	2	6	1	0	
12	Program implementation vote	11	0	7	2	0	More discussion needed
13	Program evaluation poll	20	0	1	0	0	
14	Program evaluation vote	19	1	0	0	0	Carried
15	Funding governance poll	15	4	2	0	0	
16	Funding governance vote	14	2	3	0	0	Carried
17	Administration services vote	17	1	2	0	0	Carried
18	Program funding poll	8	1	10	0	0	
19	Program funding vote	10	1	8	0	0	More discussion needed
20	Funding mechanism poll	3	12	2	1		
21	Funding mechanism vote	10	1	8	0		More discussion needed

Examination of the day's results showed endorsement of the Strategic Plan, Governance Option 1, Staffing Option 1, Communications and Information Option 1, Program Evaluation Option 1, Funding for Governance Option 1, and the Admin Services Option 1. More discussion was needed on Program Development, Program Implementation, Program Funding, and the Funding Mechanism.

The closing plenary discussion on the results of the day focused on the difference in perspective of the participants. Should the NRCE Forum start small and evolve, or should parties fund the ideal situation from the beginning? Issues that needed more discussion were referred to the leadership committee for resolution.

It was acknowledged that there is now a solid foundation to move this initiative to the next phase. With a strategy in place, positive momentum, and leaders selected, participants are ready to move into the implementation stage.

9 FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

1. Produce a draft workshop report and circulate to attendees for comment;
2. Post the Workshop Report to the NRCE Forum site;
3. Convene a meeting of the leadership team to decide on appointment of a new team;
4. New leadership team confirms points of agreement, points for further discussion, or presentation of options to funding agencies;
5. Revisit the needs assessments and get a gap analysis completed for all associations; and
6. Leadership team makes presentation to funding agencies.

APPENDIX 1 – FLIP CHART NOTES

Governance Discussion

- Funding is issue, need to get \$ costs nailed down
- I vote for option one with changes because I have reservations. The concern of a number of participants involved the volunteer aspect of option 1 and the level of commitment needed

Staffing Discussion

- Concern over f/t versus p/t – a number of participants suggested position needed full time
- Discussion about a position outside MFR, requires more collaboration, prefer solely education focus
- Term needs to be clarified – ongoing allocated

Program Development Discussion

- Questions about how revenue streams are going to be handled
- Questions about review process for proposals and funding
- How will pooling of \$ occur and be allocated – develop growth plan
- Online course [updates] should be weekly or at least monthly not annually
- Clarity around definitions program versus product
- Question about fee setting – each institution will be guided by its own internal policy in regards to fee setting
- Significant discussion about difference between continuing studies and university program development which is base-funded versus cost-recovery

Program Implementation

- A number of participants said they voted for option 2 because they see this as the future (“where we need to go”) but agreed that option 1 is the place to start

Funding Governance

- Questions about amount of money allocated to director – may not be enough