

Appraisal Practice Issue #4: How to Maintain Competence in Appraisals (September 2008)

Competence is defined in our Standards of Professional Practice as: “properly qualified; answering all requirements; having sufficient capacity, ability or authority; possessing the requisite physical, mental, natural, or legal qualifications; sufficient for the necessities of the work.” It goes on to say, “Competence goes beyond formal qualifications. It has to do with sufficiency of qualifications to deal with the matter in question. It includes knowledge, skill and the ability to use them effectively in the public interest. Three essential components of competence are: knowledge; completeness and correctness; and professional care.”

Question: How do I know if I am competent in the appraisal field of practice?

The public, client and employer are entitled to assume that the forest professional has the ability and capacity to deal adequately with any matters undertaken on their behalf. A forest professional should not accept an assignment without honestly feeling either competent to handle it, or able to become competent without undue delay, risk or expense to the public resource, client or employer.

The knowledge standard states: “Competent members maintain sufficient knowledge in their field(s) of practice”

The following list describes some of the activities members can undertake to meet the knowledge standard:

- Participate in continuing education activities; Regional and provincial appraisal meetings, internal employer appraisal updates.
- Keep current on readings in professional forums, IAM or CAM manuals, read notes from meetings that you are unable to attend. Read through the issues and comments made on Revenue SharePoint sites.
- Participate in discussion groups, technical committees and professional committees;
- Develop a circle of mentors, colleagues and peers with whom to engage in regular communication;
- Share knowledge and expertise with others &
- Continually practice in the appraisal world. This will serve to keep you informed, develop peer relationships, and be up to date on appraisal review and submission expectations.

To be judged knowledgeable, a member must be able to answer the following two questions of themselves affirmatively: (1) Do I have the necessary knowledge to complete the task? And (2) Does this level of knowledge meet the expectations of my peers and the profession? Competent professionals continuously evaluate whether they are practicing within the limits of their training and experience.

The completeness and correctness standard states: “Competent members ensure their work is complete, correct and clear.”**

All appraisal work must:

- Be scientifically and technically sound;
- Recognize and respect the many, and sometimes competing, values and interests in forest management and provide sound professional judgment as to how to accommodate these interests and values consistent with the first requirement of the Code of Ethics (Bylaw 11.3.1);
- Include the relevant considerations and implications;
- Balance expectations of the public, professional colleagues and the client or employer;
- Be supported by sufficient rationale so that, where required, others can implement recommendations or prescriptions for action and meet the objectives and commitments embodied in the work;
- Be free of errors and omissions;^{1,2}
- Meet all legal requirements; and
- Be clear and understandable for the intended recipient.

The professional care standard states: “competent members exercise appropriate judgment and discretion with due care.” Members owe duties of care to the environment, the public, their clients or employers, and their profession and colleagues.

The standard of professional care is a comparative one. The member must ask the following question, “What would a similarly educated, similarly situated professional do when faced with the same or a similar situation?” This standard takes experience, public or stakeholder input, practice circumstances, as well as the individual circumstances of the situation into account. In deciding whether the standard of professional care has been met, it is important to distinguish between the professional standard or expectation (which the professional must meet) and what might be a common practice of the day. Just because a particular practice may be common (or carried out by a segment of peers) it does not elevate that practice to the standard expected of the professional or the profession. Rather, it is the professional standard which must be met.

¹Professional work in appraisals is complicated by the fact that an appraisal submission contains some professional estimates at a point in time. The forest professional needs to ensure that the context of the estimate is understood, and both the review and submitter need the understanding that there are other possible outcomes in the field. The key here is that the forest professional must not misrepresent facts and must follow a pattern of due diligence that is consistent with the Standards of Professional Practice.

² A test of reasonableness, relevant to the circumstances, is necessary to apply to the guidance statement.